



# Queen Alexandra

by Sir George Arthur

Author of "King George V," "The Life of Lord Kitchener," etc.

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IT has been well said of Queen Alexandra that while her loveliness exceeded that of Marguerite of Valois, and her charms those of Mary Stuart, her merits were all her own. One thing is certain that, within a few months of her landing on these shores, she was lifted, as it were, by an unanimous show of hands, to a pinnacle of popularity for which English history scarcely furnishes a parallel, and from which posterity will never seek to displace her. Nor was this a mere tribute to womanly beauty, for the rapturous reception, which greeted her wherever she went, was the same when she left London for the last time, as when London caught its first glimpse of her as a bride. English Society, over which the Prince and Princess of Wales quickly assumed virtual sovereignty, sixty years ago, acquired under their kindly sway a character differing sharply from that on which Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had set their hall-mark. Upon their accession Edward and Alexandra set out to dissipate the gloom which for forty years had attached to the court, and soon succeeded in making it the most brilliant in Europe. Queen Alexandra was concerned with every event in her husband's life, and was raised by him to a status which perhaps no Queen consort had before occupied. She never allowed herself to be involved in the labyrinth of politics, but her outlook on international affairs was necessarily coloured by her intense dislike of Prussia, engendered by the invasion of her native country, and by her subsequent distrust of Germans and by her hatred of the system of Prussianism, which, as she clearly saw, was an abiding menace to the peace of Europe.

Queen Alexandra's life was by no means an easy one, but it was crowded with varied interests, and the institutions which bear her name are witnesses to her incessant benevolence and her devoted care of the poor.



*QUEEN ALEXANDRA*



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Life of Lord Kitchener*

*George the Fifth*

*Sarah Bernhardt*

*Lord Haig*

*The Story of the Household Cavalry, etc., etc.*





THE PRINCESS OF WALES BY LAUREN

*By gracious permission of H M the King*

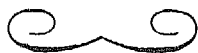
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*QUEEN ALEXANDRA*

*by*

*SIR GEORGE ARTHUR*



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## FOREWORD

THIS volume represents a rough attempt to weave into something like plan the various threads of information which through sixty years was extended to the public, concerning a Queen of whom it was well said that her charm exceeded that of Mary, Queen of Scots, her beauty that of Marguerite of Valois, while her merits were all her own.

My most dutiful thanks are due to His Majesty the King for his gracious permission to make use of the portrait by Lauchert and the sketch by Violet, Duchess of Rutland; I would extend my gratitude to the Duchess for selecting the illustrations to be found within the book, and to the Dowager Countess of Antrim, the Dowager Countess of Gosford and the Hon. Violet Vivian, sometime ladies-in-waiting to Queen Alexandra, for kindly and valuable advice.

GEORGE ARTHUR.

*May, 1934.*



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## CHAPTER I

And whence comes Love?  
Like morning light, it comes without thy call.  
And how dies Love?  
A spirit bright, Love never dies at all.

IN 1848, with the accession of Frederick VIII, the question began to be acute, and rather awkward, as to who should eventually succeed to the Throne of Denmark. The Danish Crown could pass to an heiress; in the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein the Salic Law had never been repealed and, in the event of a failure of male heirs, the succession, anyhow according to German jurists, would revert to the Dukes of Augustenberg. Circumstances pointed pretty clearly to Frederick remaining childless, and his next of kin was his sister Princess Charlotte, wife of Landgraf William of Hesse.

At this juncture the Tsar of Russia came forward with something a little more than a suggestion. The Landgraf and Landgravine had, among other children, a very attractive daughter, Princess Louise, who had married Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg. Where could a more suitable couple, the Tsar asked, be found for King and Queen of Denmark? With their selection a term might be set to the struggle, so far restricted, which had broken out over the Duchies;

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and within the monarchy itself there might thus be a chance of composing the rival, and mutually irritating, claims of Schleswig-Holsteinism and Eiderdanism.<sup>1</sup> The Courts of Europe were sounded, a wordy and rather windy correspondence ensued, and in 1852 there was signed in London a protocol which set out that, failing male issue in the direct line of Frederick VIII, the Crown of Denmark should revert to Prince Christian and his Consort.

But there had been a good many lean years—and there were still a few in store—for a Prince of unblemished character and no little personal charm; at any moment a Crown might be put on his head, but, for a considerable period, he possessed little else than a commission in the Guards, a record of good service in the field, a rather bare palace, *Det Gule Pala*, in Copenhagen, and a growing family of six children, all destined to make alliances of first-rate importance, of whom the eldest was born on the 1st of December 1844, and, six weeks later, christened Alexandra.<sup>2</sup>

However narrow the circumstances of Prince and Princess Christian, they contrived to give their children a sound education in the real sense of the word; they taught them *how* to learn, knowing that the *what* to learn would surely follow. The parents themselves largely filled the parts of instructor and governess. The mother could teach her daughters

<sup>1</sup>Eiderdanism was the policy of extending Denmark to the Eider and obliterating German Schleswig in order to prevent Germany from swallowing Schleswig whole.

<sup>2</sup>The other names given were Caroline Mary Charlotte Louisa Julia.

## THE YELLOW PALACE

French, German and English, and they could, later, speak these fluently and accurately although Danish remained the language in which their thoughts always flowed more readily. Princess Christian was also a *bonâ fide* skilled musician and admitted that she found in Princess Alexandra the most apt and eager of her pupils. Then before the midday meal Prince Christian always put his children through a course of gymnastics and physical exercises, and in after life rather prided himself that their upright figures, easy carriage and perfect digestions were due to the training imposed on them.

Life was very happy in the Yellow Palace although it was dictated by strict economy. The two elder girls shared a room in which a couple of beds and a large table formed the chief furniture, their cherished photographs on the walls being its only ornament. The Princesses had playmates who wore much more expensive frocks but who could never "put them on" quite so well. A dress of fine white *mousseline de soie* was the object of Alexandra's special envy, and a youthful petition was framed accordingly to receive the plain answer: "Your father cannot afford to give you dresses which cost much, or many of them, and you must help to make them yourselves." Hospitality within the limits of a very slender purse was freely offered, but guests were seldom asked to stay, and when they came, the daughters had to share with their mother some of the lighter household duties.

The summer holidays were spent, in comparative

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luxury, at Rumpenheim, the palace picturesquely poised on the Maine, the property of the Landgraves of Hesse. The old Landgrave Frederick had bequeathed the place to his six children, of whom the Duchess of Cambridge<sup>1</sup> was the survivor, with the enjoinder that they and his grandchildren should meet there every year. The holidays therefore resolved themselves into family gatherings where, curiously enough, complete harmony seemed always to reign, and in which three generations would be represented. *Il y a aussi*, wrote Princess Mary of Cambridge in enforced French, to her governess at home, *une petite voiture dans laquelle nous conduisons de temps en temps la petite Alexandrine*.

At Copenhagen there was little coming and going between the Fredensborg Palace and the Yellow Palace. The third wife of Frederick VIII, whom he had morganatically espoused, was a lady of rather doubtful origin who had styled herself Countess Danmer and who was anyhow a good deal less than the consort of a King should be; Court entertainments, in consequence, were neither frequent nor eagerly sought after, and anything like intimacy was generally discouraged.

Some little ceremonial, however, attended the confirmation of Princess Alexandra and her eldest brother in the spring of 1861, and after the service the King held a reception when the brother and sister made a sort of *début* and the various notabilities in Copenhagen were presented to them.

<sup>1</sup>Wife of the 7th son of George III and grandmother of Queen Mary.

## *RUMPENHEIM*

Three years earlier a photograph of the Princess had been taken by a local artist and a copy of it went to her great aunt the Duchess of Cambridge; judged by modern standards it was a very modest effort but some faces are lovely enough to be photographer-proof.

To Cambridge Cottage, Kew, the sixteen-year-old Prince of Wales came, from White Lodge hard by, for his first dinner-party; his eyes lighted on the photograph, and lingered there delightedly.



## CHAPTER II

A LITTLE Danish Princess was not fourteen years old when negotiations were first set afoot which ultimately issued in her translation to England. The King of the Belgians had, in July 1858, forwarded to Queen Victoria a list of seven Princesses, all eligible for the position of a Queen Consort, and, from the very start, six of them<sup>1</sup> were out of the running; the daughter of Prince and Princess Christian was only fifth on the roll, but as she was obviously Uncle Leopold's choice, her name was at once preferred at Windsor. The matter was casually mentioned to the Prince of Wales, then undergoing military training at the Curragh, who evidently evaded the subject and replied to his mother's letter "in a rather confused manner."

But three years later, benevolent feminine influence was at work; the Princess Royal, supremely happy in her own early marriage, was determined that her eldest brother should, with the least possible delay, follow her example, and she believed herself capable of catering for his tastes. Beauty, she was sure, was an essential condition and of Princess Alexandra's

<sup>1</sup>The other six young ladies were of purely Teuton extraction and whatever the Prussian proclivities of the Prince Consort, he wisely remembered that Queen Charlotte, however prolific, had not been conspicuously successful as a mother, while Queen Caroline had been a lamentable failure as a wife.

## PRINCESS ALEXANDRA

ripening beauty she had heard a glowing account from her lady-in-waiting, Countess von Hohenthal, the fiancée of Mr. Augustus Paget, British Minister to the Danish Court. She was determined to follow up the idea and make her own report to England, a report on which her father would largely rely; the determination was quickened by a rumour that the Tsar intended to draw upon Denmark for a bride for the Tsarevich. Queen Victoria had no affection for Denmark but for Russia she had a positive dislike and the daughter may have shivered to think how incensed her mother would be if from Russia came interference with any plan, however immature, which the Prince Consort had favoured. Countess Hohenthal, then in Copenhagen, was commissioned to *tâter le terrain*, even if necessary to be "just a little indiscreet" and to secure and forward a photograph of "the young lady;" unfortunately, the only portrait available was, according to Princess Christian, "horrible and looks like a poster." Details, however, of Princess Alexandra's confirmation and its attendant circumstances were forthcoming which went to show that there was a good deal beside physical graces to recommend the "young lady" for an exalted station. Obviously the Princess Royal must see and judge for herself, only this must be done without exciting comment or raising hopes which might not be realised. The happy thought occurred of "Aunt Augusta." The Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, as first cousin alike of Queen Victoria and Princess Christian, was, so to speak, astride the situation, and it would be quite easy for her to ask

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the Princesses concerned to spend a few days together at Strelitz. Countess Hohenthal was very tactful, both the Grand Duchess and Princess Christian were quite willing, the visit took place at the end of May, and the Princess Royal "fell for" her future sister-in-law at once. "Princess Alix is the most charming being in the world; you did not say enough by far," she wrote to her faithful friend. "It has been a long time since I have seen anybody whom I have liked so well as this lovely, graceful figure. The meeting was so natural and went off so well, thanks to your efforts and your wit. Princess Alix and I got acquainted very quickly and I came to love her dearly in those few days; she is, in short, simply adorable." "Fritz"<sup>1</sup> also had "never been so charmed by anyone," Princess Christian—this was more qualified—is "very nice and amiable" and "little Dagmar a darling." With this impression burnt in her mind, the Princess betook herself to England and persuaded her parents, who showed no reluctance, to allow an initial, and informal, meeting to take place between the young people on German soil in the early autumn. This only required a little manœuvring; in September the Prince with his sister was "seeing places" in Germany; at Rumpenheim there was assembled the usual family party under the hospitable roof of the old Landgrave. "Louise of Denmark and her three girls are here, the eldest strikingly lovely, the second sweetly pretty," wrote Princess Mary. Hard by was the Cathedral of Speier, of no little historical or architectural value and

<sup>1</sup>The Crown Prince of Prussia.

## THE FIRST MEETING

quite suitable for an important tryst. Here, as if by accident, the young people met, and arranged to meet again on the morrow at Heidelberg. Pleasant impressions were mutually created and photographs were quickly exchanged; the Prince had already seen hers at Kew Cottage and "I have his in my pocket," Princess Alexandra blushinglly confided a few days later to her sister. "We hear nothing but good of Princess Alexandra," Prince Albert wrote a week later to his daughter, "and the young people seem to have taken a warm liking to one another." The fiat had practically gone forth, Princess Royal's sisterly diplomacy had been unerring, but there was to be a mournful interval before it could fructify.

The shock of Queen Victoria's bereavement only sharpened her determination to carry out two plans which had been jointly laid down; the Prince Consort's will had been the law she had gladly obeyed, and his death rendered that law more than ever binding on her. "No human power," she told her uncle with some asperity, "will make me swerve from what he decided and wished." The Prince of Wales was to tour Egypt and Palestine under the tutelage of General Bruce and the guidance of Dean Stanley, and both the General and the Dean were to encourage (very little encouragement was required) the contemplated union with the Princess whose unconscious candidature a wise father had from the first favoured.

The five months' trip was instructive, enjoyable and wholly successful, and in June 1862 the traveller

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"greatly improved and most affectionate and dutiful" had rejoined his mother at Windsor.

Meanwhile, cares of State and indulgence in unmitigated woe had not prevented the Queen from busying herself with her son's welfare. She was first of all anxious "about a provision for Bertie and his wife" and spoke to Mr. Gladstone on the subject; the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not only very "kind and feeling" but very practical in arranging a year later with the Prime Minister that a sum of £40,000 from the State funds should be added to the income of, roughly, £62,000 already at the Prince's disposal and derived from the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall, interest on the Duchy accumulations, and the Sandringham rents; an annuity of £10,000 was to be granted to the Princess with an addition to it of £20,000 in the unhappy event of her widowhood during Queen Victoria's reign. This hypothetical dowry, the Queen protested and Mr. Gladstone agreed, would be quite insufficient unless generous provision were made for children.

Other matters affecting the domestic future of the Prince of Wales and, later on, even more that of the Princess, had engaged the Queen's attention. Under an act of 1850, which had not been passed without Radical opposition, Marlborough House, perhaps not the happiest of Christopher Wren's efforts, was already in possession of the Heir to the Throne in virtue of his having attained his eighteenth year. But what had been suitable for Queen Adelaide would be by no means adequate for a young married couple, and a few months before his death the Prince

## MARLBOROUGH HOUSE

Consort had persuaded the Government to remodel the building and had quickly concerned himself with questions of repair and reconstruction. To see that her husband's wishes, which had been committed to paper, were carried out to the letter, and to speed matters so that the house should be ready for her son's occupation at the end of the year, had afforded the Queen some melancholy pleasure.

Then, under the same paternal direction, a large slice of the piled-up surplus from the Duchy of Cornwall revenues had been invested in real estate. Two houses of historic interest and architectural beauty, Houghton and Bramshill, were said to have been under consideration, but choice was eventually made of a property in Norfolk belonging to Mr. Spencer Cooper—the step-son of the Prime Minister—to whom the purchase money of £200,000 was particularly welcome. A further sum of £60,000 had been withdrawn from the Duchy savings, and the Queen could tell her son that, in his absence, the improvements to the property in which he was eagerly interested had gone steadily forward and that he would be greatly pleased with the progress made, under the eye of the head gardener at Balmoral in the laying out anew of the grounds and gardens.

It was quickly obvious that while in the Near East the Prince had kept his marriage plans constantly in mind as well as a cherished photograph close in his pocket. "I know you will be pleased when you see her," had been the burden of many of his letters; he now eagerly showed his mother and sisters "a number of pretty things" he had bought "for the young

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lady," and he was quite explicit as to his wish that the ceremony to which he was impatiently looking forward should take place in the following spring.

On the "young lady's" side there was some slight, but quite genuine, hesitation. She was deeply in love; how could it be otherwise when she was being wooed, and had been more than half won, by a veritable Prince Charming? She blushed rosily whenever his name was mentioned and was consequently exposed to a good deal of teasing from her brothers and sisters. "If I only knew for certain that he really wants it," she said again and again to her rather distracted mother; she was haunted by the thought that it was a marriage *de convenance*, a matter that had been "arranged." "That would be a terrible idea, I would not do it." The Crown Princess once more came to the front; she was positive her parents always wished their children to choose for themselves in matrimonial affairs, so if it had not been the earnest wish of her brother himself, "it would not have gone so far as this."

Early in July Princess Christian thought the time had come to ask her daughter point blank what would be the answer if the Prince of Wales were to seek her out and make her a definite proposal. The reply was at first non-committal; she was not "suitable," she felt herself "far too unimportant," but eventually there came the admission that she was longing "to see him again." This was sufficient and Princess Christian who, truth to tell, had her child's real happiness at heart, could, through a discreet channel, let it be known that "Alix did not look for

## AT LAEKEN

anything else but love," but if love were forthcoming, no refusal of the Prince of Wales's hand need be feared.

On the 1st of July there was celebrated in the dining-room at Osborne the marriage of the Queen's second daughter with Prince Louis of Hesse, and as soon as that rather funereal feast was over, the Queen drafted an admirably worded letter to the Prince Christian soliciting the hand of his eldest daughter for her eldest son, and received, as she fully expected, a reply of willing consent. It now only remained to meet her prospective daughter-in-law face to face, and the meeting, she did not hesitate to say, brought the first gleam of real gladness into her widowed life. It was but for a moment perhaps, but Uncle Leopold had been quite right to tell her that a *rayon de soleil* would shine into her heart.

For some weeks past the Queen had decided to visit again the birthplace of Prince Consort, and on her way to Coburg she would spend a couple of days at Laeken, her uncle's palace near Brussels. Things "fitted in" quite nicely; Princess Alexandra was with her parents and sister at Ostend, and thence to Laeken the party was summoned on the 2nd of September. In a small sitting-room, outside the great drawing-room, the presentations were made by the Duchesse de Brabant<sup>1</sup> and the lady—now Mrs. Paget—who had so skilfully engineered matters a year earlier. Prince Christian the Queen had not seen for twenty-four years; towards his wife she was not favourably disposed. "Princess Christian," she

<sup>1</sup>Later Queen of the Belgians.



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chillily wrote, "must have been quite good-looking, unfortunately she is very deaf." Princess Alexandra, however, she thought "lovely, a beautiful refined profile," and what was even better, (and would have appealed more closely to Prince Albert,) "a quiet, ladylike manner." Dagmar was "different"—presumably only in appearance—"with fine brown eyes." There was a rather stiff interchange of greetings, a luncheon which the Queen did not attend—although fixed for two o'clock to suit her habits—and then came the interview which, even if the betrothal had been for some time a *chose jugée*, afforded a "terribly trying" moment. The parents would know, the Queen was sure, what *we* wished, but what she now had to say alone; their dear daughter must feel that in accepting her son she was doing so with all her heart and will, and must remember that she would be entering a very sad house. This did not sound very exhilarating but the reply was all that could be wished; Prince and Princess Christian trusted that "Bertie had the same inclination" and would pray God to give their dear child strength to do what she ought and pour some comfort into her august mother-in-law's wounded heart. A day elapsed while the spell was working; and then "after dinner Prince and Princess Christian and Princess Alexandra, who had tactfully put on a dead black dress for the occasion, came upstairs." "She looked lovely," was the verdict, "nothing in her hair and curls on either side which hung down over her shoulders, her hair turned back over her beautiful forehead; her whole appearance was one of the

## *QUEEN VICTORIA CAPTIVATED*

greatest charm combined with simplicity and perfect dignity." In a moment, and apparently without an effort, a Princess who had not yet reached her eighteenth birthday, had captured the British Sovereign just as quickly and as triumphantly as, six months later, she was to capture the British people. "I came, I was seen, I conquered," might have been an entry in her diary if she had ever kept one. Queen Victoria seemed to surrender at discretion; all—and there was so much—that was warmhearted in her was called out. In the happy bygone days at Balmoral the son had given the mother a bit of white heather which she had treasured; the treasure, more precious than any jewel, was handed over with the whispered hope that it would bring all happiness.

## CHAPTER III

FROM Brussels the Queen proceeded to Coburg, and on the 9th September a telegram was hurriedly deciphered and placed in her hands; in the villa at Ostend her son had "proposed and been accepted" and now begged for his Sovereign's consent and his mother's blessing. Uncle Leopold had of course been in the picture; the formal proposal took place at Laeken to be followed by an even more formal banquet; far more enjoyable was an informal trip to the battlefield of Waterloo—where, however, the young people were far too happy<sup>1</sup> to be much concerned with the details of the battle—and then the—all too short—journey to Cologne. Here the Queen decreed Prince and Princess should part and not meet again for two months; the Prince was to join his mother at Coburg and then, with the Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia, to travel in Switzerland and Italy; he was not even to enjoy at Windsor his twenty-first birthday when the Royal Consent in Council would be given to his marriage. The reason for this enforced separation—although it is doubtful if the Queen vouchsafed any reason—was partly due

<sup>1</sup>"I can assure you that I only know now what it is to be really happy," the Prince of Wales wrote to one of his cousins, "and if I can only prove to dear Alix that I am not unworthy of her love and make her future life a happy one, I think I shall have every reason to be content."

## THE BETROTHAL

to the sense of propriety, then in vogue, which prohibited an engaged couple from seeing much of one another before the wedding, but was chiefly actuated by a strong personal motive.

The announcement of the betrothal of the Prince of Wales had been received in England with unqualified approbation and no little enthusiasm and Lord Granville wrote quite accurately: "It is impossible to exaggerate how pleased everyone in all classes here is with the good news. All accounts agree as to the excellence and charm of the person whom Your Royal Highness has secured." But from Germany came some ugly sounds: *C'est le ton qui fait la musique* and German public opinion hammered out some unfriendly chords. Princess Alexandra's connection with a threatened kingdom only made her name the more popular in a chivalrous England, but the German States, now contemplating a gross act of aggression under Prussian leadership, muttered that the Royal Family of England might, anyhow in spirit, take the part of the Danes in a forthcoming and, from a military point of view, one-sided contest.

Victoria was nothing daunted; she believed her son's happiness to be at stake and her whole-hearted approval of his choice was not shaken by a hair's breadth, but her German relations meant much to her and she would lose no moment in warning her future daughter-in-law against indulgence in any exhibition of Danish partisanship when settled in neutral territory. For this she felt it behoved her to have long heart-to-heart talks with the Princess who was invited—invited is perhaps scarcely the word—

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to stay for at least a month at Osborne and Windsor. The father might escort his daughter to England but must not stay more than two days, the mother was pointedly excluded from the "invitation;" above all, "Bertie" must be well out of the way because, in the course of the catechism to be imposed on her, his bride must be urged to use all her influence to prevent him from appearing to espouse any cause merely because it lay near his wife's heart. After all, the Queen remembered, Albert had said to Uncle Leopold: "We take the Princess but not her relations."

The Prince of Wales viewed the plan, as soon as he heard of it, with great distaste; King Leopold, to whom he wrote begging for support, heartily backed him, but for once was scarcely even listened to. In vain he pleaded that the ordeal would be too great, the poor child had cried half the time even when she was to stay with her grandmother, just from thinking of the coming wrench from home; in vain he reminded his niece that Princess Alexandra's parents were Princes in Denmark, and that Princess Christian was being treated with scant courtesy; in vain he suggested that some of the glamour and charm might be rubbed off by a pre-nuptial appearance of the bride-elect. But the Queen sought to obtain betimes a personal control over her daughter-in-law; nothing would make her swerve from her purpose and on the 7th of November Prince Christian brought his daughter to Osborne.

The coming caused quite a little flutter; the night was foggy, rockets and signals had to be sent up and

## AT OSBORNE

the boat—the *Black Eagle*—was delayed. The children were “greatly excited” at the thought of seeing their prospective sister-in-law; the Queen herself was nervous, she could not sit down to dinner but “took a little soup” and “waited and waited” until at last dear Alexandra “looking very lovely,” arrived and “I led *our* future daughter-in-law” to her room.

The Queen may have been agitated but, at first anyhow, a highly-strung child, who had scarcely ever been away from home, must have been almost petrified. She had been trained to Royalty losing nothing of its dignity by free intercourse with the people; she found a great Sovereign austere aloof from mundane happenings except those concerned with affairs of State. She had been accustomed to bright colour and simple gaiety; she found herself in a house of mourning stiff with etiquette where laughter was hushed and no sound—or echo—of revelry must be heard; she loved Denmark and quickly learnt that the less she mentioned Denmark the better; she adored her parents and there was little pains taken to conceal that to one of them at least no more than frigid, though faultless, courtesy would be extended.

Yet the visit was wholly successful and of lasting value. Queen Victoria, than whom no shrewder judge of character existed, was quickly, and gladly, aware that underlying gentleness and loveliness incarnate resided a real character and one which would have to be reckoned with. The Princess, on her part, was no slower to perceive that beneath a sense

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

of authority which brooked neither criticism nor contradiction, there was to be found an infinite capacity for unstinted love to which full response must be made. In the Queen's homely phrase they "took to" one another and there was laid a solid foundation of confidence and sincere affection which neither time nor experience would disturb.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of November the Court moved to Windsor where things seemed a little brighter, and from Windsor there were one or two delightful trips to Cambridge Cottage and delicious consultations with Princess Mary about the trousseau, the orange blossom, the bridesmaids<sup>2</sup> and anxious queries as to whether Osborne was, or was not, the ideal place for a honeymoon. With her sisters-in-law Princess Alexandra was to be on affectionate, but never very intimate, terms, but with Princess Mary—"beloved Maria" as she came to be called—there was always a savour of the old home and reminiscences of the happy holidays at Rumpenheim; in any trouble or difficulty—and there were to be many—to wide arms, wise advice, and as warm a heart as ever beat in woman's breast, appeal would again and again be made.

<sup>1</sup>Fifteen years later the Princess of Wales was writing to the Queen: "From the first day of my landing in England you have always shown me such invariable kindness that I should indeed be ungrateful if I did not do my best to show you in every way how I appreciate it. Thanks, a thousand thanks, for all your many kindnesses."

<sup>2</sup>The young ladies eventually chosen were:

Lady Victoria Scott	Lady Diana Beauclerk
Lady Elma Bruce	Lady Victoria Howard
Lady Emily Villiers	Lady Agneta Yorke
Lady Feo Wellesley	Lady Eleanor Hare

## PRINCESS MARY

The Prince of Wales was due to return from abroad early in December and Princess Alexandra was pressed to remain at Windsor until the middle of that month; the Prince, with the happy idea forward in his mind that he would thus secure an uninterrupted week with his betrothed, wrote from Lyons that the Queen's wishes in this matter ought to be strictly respected. But the parents put in a counter claim; the 1st of December was their daughter's birthday and the last she was likely to spend with them; they must, they really must, insist on her reaching home before that date. Queen Victoria, to whom birthdays were solemn days of obligation, yielded the point and even suggested that *the Prince might meet his bride on the 27th of November either at Lille or Calais and take her thence to Hanover.* But, and here she put her own foot firmly down, her son must not set foot in the Danish capital. To all entreaties, and protests, on this point the Queen was stone deaf; she was even unmoved by the subtle suggestion of a wise adviser<sup>1</sup> that to deprive her son of a very natural, and laudable, wish might have the precise effect of inducing him to take a definitely anti-German attitude in what seemed to be now impending troublesome events. The Queen was sure that anything which could by any possibility give the Royal marriage a political complexion must be ruled out; a visit to the Danish capital would anyhow cause her German relatives to "talk," and the susceptibilities of those German relatives must be studied, though it was

<sup>1</sup>The British Minister at Copenhagen.



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difficult for the plain man to understand how acrimonious comment could be roused by a young Prince paying a visit to his future bride in her own home.

A maternal motive reinforced the Queen's anxiety not to exacerbate Prussian feeling. She permitted her son to choose his bride where he pleased, but she was determined that there should be no "entanglement" with the circumstances and interests of the Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg family in general and that he must not be brought under the influence of Princess Christian in particular. So at Harburg, after two blissful days in Cologne and Hanover, the Prince said good-bye to his betrothed, not to see her again till the eve of the wedding, and travelled to Windsor, there to spend in the depths of gloom the first anniversary of his father's death.

On the 1st of December the treaty authorising the nuptials of the High Contracting Parties was signed at Copenhagen and immediately after ratified by the Queen. Preparations for the great event had now to be pushed on; the Prince was allowed a free hand to make all the final arrangements at Marlborough House and Sandringham with the main object in view of pleasing the Princess, but their future Households were largely, and wisely, determined by the Queen. For the Prince irreproachable selections were made in Lord Mount Edgcumbe—whom, as Lord Valletort, Prince Consort had greatly favoured—Sir William Knollys, Robert Meade,<sup>1</sup> a com-

<sup>1</sup>Sir Henry Robert Meade, 2nd son of 3rd Earl of Clavinthian, sometime Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies.

## THE HOUSEHOLDS

panion of the Near Eastern tour, and Charles Wood,<sup>1</sup> one of the very select band of early play-fellows; Major Teesdale, a distinguished Artillery officer, Captain Grey<sup>2</sup> and Lieutenant Colonel Keppel were reappointed Equerries. Lord Spencer as Groom of the Stole, Lord Alfred Hervey and Colonel Kingscote were all adherents of the Government in office; with a Tory party in power the two Peers would have to keep silence in the Upper House.

The entourage of the Princess was no less happily chosen; Lord Harris was transferred from being a Lord-in-Waiting to the Queen to the post of Chamberlain to her daughter-in-law, and although the Princess could at the time only acquiesce in the appointment of her ladies, their long service to the least exacting of mistresses went to show how entirely agreeable they were to her. Lady Macclesfield, who sprang from the house of Grosvenor, was quickly to prove herself of special, and first-rate, value. Lady Morton, a daughter of the Lord Durham of Canadian fame, more than satisfied all that remained of Whig traditions even if she revived memories of the Bedchamber Plot and another Liberal nomination was Lady de Grey, whose beautiful successor to the title was, thirty years later, to be admitted to intimate friendship with the Princess; the political balance was, however, restored by Lady Carmarthen, the daughter-in-law of a

<sup>1</sup>Succeeded as 2nd Viscount Halifax, 1885.

<sup>2</sup>"I hope your children enjoyed their Xmas as much as ours did. We of course felt too sad after the great sorrow we had gone through in losing such a dear and true friend as Major Grey." [Princess of Wales to Princess Mary, Nov. 1875.]

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sound Tory, the Duke of Leeds. The names of the Women, no less than those of the Ladies, of the Bedchamber, Mrs. Grey,<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Cooke, Mrs. Stonor<sup>2</sup> and Mrs. Hardinge were all to be found in the book of Burke; their rather more arduous duties were no less efficiently performed and they contributed in no less degree to what was very often something like a very happy family party.

On 17th February Parliament with little discussion, and no awkward debate, granted the annuities invited by the Sovereign and recommended by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and it only remained to fix the date of the wedding. Here a little difficulty arose; Princess Louis of Hesse was expecting her confinement at Windsor in April and on no account must the two events clash; climatic, no less than personal, considerations prevented an exodus from Denmark before late February unless Prince and Princess Christian would agree—which they would not—to the rather curious proposal that they should leave their home while the weather was open and spend the winter months in Brussels where—and here lay the bait—the Prince would be allowed to visit them. March was therefore indicated, but a wedding in March involved a festal function in Lent. This consideration, however, the Queen quickly brushed aside. “In my young days,” she is

<sup>1</sup>This lady married secondly a Swedish nobleman, the Duc d'Otrante, but although her health compelled her to live in retirement for twenty years, the Princess insisted on her receiving her salary.

<sup>2</sup>The Hon. Mrs. Francis Stonor died when comparatively young; her sons and daughter were for the Prince and Princess of Wales—to be the constant objects of care and affection.

### ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL

recorded to have said, "there was no Lent," and so the 10th of March was finally fixed, the Danish Family being strictly enjoined to arrive in London not later than the seventh, and in Brussels not later than the second.

The question of *when* having been decided, the *where* had to be determined, and people clamoured for a service in London. But the Chapel Royal was voted too small; St. Paul's was, for some reason, ruled out altogether; Westminster Abbey was discussed only to be quickly dismissed, and although railway travelling in full dress has its disadvantages for ladies—especially those of an uncertain age—St. George's Chapel, where no Royal marriage had taken place since the days of Henry I, remained the only choice. Correspondence between General Grey, the Queen's Private Secretary, and Mr. Paget regarding arrangements and negotiations was continuous, and the latter was reminded more than once that three days must be allowed between the arrival of the Princess and the wedding, and that not less than five days should be spent in Brussels. And although 900 guests were to be bidden to St. George's, the Queen was explicit that, as regards the bride's family, invitations were only to be issued to Prince and Princess Christian and their children, Prince Christian's eldest brother, the Duke of Glucksburg, and the Princess's brother, Prince Frederick of Hesse.

## CHAPTER IV

ON the 26th of February the bride-elect set out for her future home; due warning had been given of limited accommodation on board the royal yacht which was to convey her from Flushing, room must be left for General Grey and an equerry, who were to meet her in Brussels, and the decree went that only her immediate family and personal suite—of which Mr. Paget was to be one—should accompany her.

The Danes were determined that if they must lose the Princess, who was the apple of their eye, she should have a great send-off from their capital. Every house on the route to the railway station was gay with bunting or flew British and Scandinavian flags; flowers were flung from the windows at the carriage in which Princess Alexandra sat with her parents and eldest brother, the streets were thronged and at the station, "handsomely"—if hideously—decorated, the Chief President delivered a farewell address which had all the merits of simplicity and sincerity.

The start was not propitious as the boat had scarcely left Korsoer when the boiler burst and there was a vexatious delay in reaching Kiel, the Kiel which three years later was to become a prey to a greedy Prussia. At Hamburg, on the night of the twenty-seventh, the whole town was illuminated,

### *COPENHAGEN'S FAREWELL*

and fourteen thousand leather-lunged enthusiasts assembled outside the Schloss to shout a welcome. Here the great staircase was lined, or rather crowded, with a bevy of young ladies in white muslin and pink scarves, while a choir of young gentlemen provided a serenade under the windows of the Princess, who was so tired that she begged for an hour's postponement of the start next morning, perhaps the first lapse into the lack of punctuality which was to be her besetting but somehow by no means unbecoming, weakness.

From Hamburg to Hanover, where blind King George, to whose kindly rule a term was soon to be put, said and did all that was right and proper, and whence—at the instigation of the Princess—a telegram was sent to the Queen inquiring after Prince Alfred's health, and a descriptive letter, with little intimate touches, went to Lord Russell. The Foreign Minister had been a little hurt by the rather crude way in which the Garter had just been bestowed on him, and the missive was soothing and highly opportune.

At Brussels where three days were spent—not five as the Queen wished—King Leopold of course took charge of everything and everybody. His had been the pen to draft the list of eligible brides in which Princess Alexandra was starred; his was the authority to prevail on the Queen to waive her original prescription that the progress to London should be in mourning. He had rightly insisted that the forthcoming marriage was "quite a love match," and inasmuch as it was a genuine case of love at first

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sight "any argument that the heir to the British Throne had been urged to marry a young lady whom he had never seen must fall to the ground." In every detail of the business of a Royal betrothal Uncle Leopold had been a prime mover and had once more earned the title, rather slightly bestowed on him by Queen Victoria's uncles, of *le Marquis peu à peu*. He had even prepared—and this was kept a great secret—a bridal robe which only after much hesitation and at the last moment was laid aside, the Queen patriotically preferring Honiton to Brussels lace for a wedding in which Great Britain was so deeply concerned.

At Brussels also, on his way to London, was the Crown Prince of Prussia, affable and amiable as ever but not quite easy in his relations with Prince and Princess Christian; nor was he quite tactful in his inquiry whether the bride were just a little *distracte* and in his suggestion that the extreme delicacy of appearance might argue some delicacy of constitution, a suggestion to be belied by a lifelong immunity from petty indispositions which enabled every engagement, public or private, to be faithfully kept.

King Leopold saw to it that nothing should be left undone which should be done to pay honour to a lady whom he considered he had designated for the future office of Queen; ten State carriages met her on arrival, and the same *cortège* was prepared for her progress to the station on the morning of the fifth, the Grand Marshal of the Belgian Court being deputed to accompany her to Antwerp, where the *Victoria and Albert*, with the *Warrior* as escort, was in readiness to

## KING LEOPOLD

embark the precious freight for Flushing and Margate.

At Flushing the *Resistance* and the *Revenge* manned yards, and the sailors were with difficulty, and not without some grumbling, restrained from cheering, the Admiral having been instructed that the reception was to be "quiet and respectful." The enforced chill may have struck the Princess as not quite consonant with all she had heard about "Merrie England" at times of festival but, as far as she was concerned, she "played up" by standing on the paddle box and bowing with the inimitable grace which was to be her hall-mark.

The sea was so smooth that the Admiral decided to cross at once to Margate, and showed himself to be weather-wise, as with the morning a gale got up and for days blew continuously, and destructively.

Flushing's disappointment was Margate's opportunity, and the Mayor and Corporation seized it to come on board with the first of a long line of loyal and tedious addresses. The Princess smilingly accepted it, without quite understanding what it was all about, took it as read, and, after the retirement of the civic dignitaries, found it, when rolled up, a handy instrument with which to beat a tattoo on the youthful head of the future King of Greece.

Punctual to promise the yacht, on the morning of the 7th, proceeded up the Thames and anchored at Gravesend at noon; here there was an awkward hiatus, the Prince of Wales having been delayed on the road from Windsor—probably the only occasion in the course of forty-seven years when he kept his



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Consort waiting; it was not until twelve-thirty that the landing took place at Gravesend where everybody who was anybody got as close as possible to the ship, Kent having been combed for the sixty prettiest girls deputed to strew flowers on the path of the young girl who was emerging from the cool of shadow into a blaze of publicity.

At the Bricklayers' Arms station, Southwark, which had been reached by rail, an escort of Life Guards was drawn up, and there were in waiting six carriages which contrasted unfavourably in quality, as well as quantity, with King Leopold's ten. The procession was a little mean in construction, but the people only wanted to see the Princess, and as the City of London authorities and the Metropolitan Police had had a "turn-up" about the arrangements, there was some disorder on the route; over and over again the cheering throngs broke into the roadway and so hung up the pace that five o'clock had struck before the advance guard clattered into Paddington Station. So, although the reception at Slough was truncated, and the Eton boys had to put their address back in their pockets, it was not till after dark and in pouring rain that Windsor Castle was reached and "dear Alix looking like a rose," and apparently not in the least fatigued by a seven hours' procession, could receive the Queen's embrace, take off her grey dress and fur-trimmed violet jacket and get half an hour's rest before the family dinner, which the Queen, "feeling desolate and sad," did not join.

The evening, however, was successful, largely because the newcomer had made up her mind it

## ARRIVAL AT WINDSOR

should be so. She knocked at the Queen's door, peeped in and came and knelt down before her, and once more the Queen yielded to a charm which she had been quick to acknowledge if never quite able to understand. She was "much moved and kissed her again and again." Dagmar, too, was found to have "extremely pretty manners," the Queen took a liking to Prince Christian and pronounced Princess Christian, although "her great deafness is a great misfortune," to be extremely well dressed.

There was, of course, Sunday morning service in the Private Chapel and the Bishop of Oxford, obeying the Pauline injunction to be all things to all men, took for his text, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep;" in the afternoon the Queen could herself take the young people to the Mausoleum and whisper to them reverently of Prince Consort and, incidentally, of the Duchess of Kent, and that evening was "quietly spent," and then the next morning the Lord Mayor of London came with a necklace and ear-rings for which £10,000 had been paid. It was all just a little stiff and rather mirthless, but that afternoon the bright idea occurred to someone of a drive in an open carriage to Eton College where the boys turned out *en masse* and cheered to the echo, a sort of rehearsal of the cheers they were going to give the next day in the places reserved for them at the Castle gates; and at night there was a party at the Castle and a capital display of fireworks in the Home Park, which the Queen's guests, but not the Queen herself, could view from the State apartments.

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Weddings proverbially "go off well"—except those of Juliet and Miss Pecksniff—but on the 10th of March, 1863, the sun combined with pomp and circumstance to render Royal nuptials as brilliant a pageant as the eyes of those invited to see it could desire. Only the Queen would take no part in it, but, clad in deepest mourning—relieved only by the blue ribbon of the Garter—she watched the colourful ceremony from the Royal closet above the chancel, and so mournful was her appearance that her very unsentimental Prime Minister was moved to tears. Half mourning was also ordained for, and worn by, her daughters;<sup>1</sup> the procession of Princesses was headed by Princess Mary, superb as usual in carriage, and was closed by the Crown Princess of Prussia in white satin and leading by the hand, according to an effusive chronicler, "her sweet little child Prince William." Ten minutes later the "sweet little child" was busy pinching the legs of his youthful kilted uncles whose sense of decorum prevented their retaliating; twenty-five years later he would set out as Emperor, on his sinister course which was to issue in nothing less than the world agony.

The bride, lovely as a dream,<sup>2</sup> kept her bridegroom waiting—as all brides should—for a few minutes; she may have thought the Chorale, composed by Prince Consort and in which no less a singer than

<sup>1</sup>The Duchess of Inverness, perhaps to emphasise her established relationship with the Royal Family, created rather a sensation by appearing in a long silk mantle of Stuart tartan.

<sup>2</sup>"The Princess of Wales would make New York stand on tip-toe to look at her." [Lord Russell to Lord Lyons, then British Minister at Washington.]

## THE WEDDING

Jenny Lind took part, a trifle tedious, and she may have had difficulty in restraining a smile when the Archbishop of Canterbury's exhortation was broken into by the musicians who, as a gentle hint that they had heard enough, began tuning their instruments; but the "I will" was spoken with perfect clearness, the curtsey to the Queen was an exquisite impromptu, and her whole appearance was so entrancing that Lord Palmerston must have voiced the general feeling when he wrote the same evening: "The Danish Princess has made Danes of us all."

From Osborne, where the honeymoon was spent, came brief letters brimming over with happiness, but less than a fortnight's respite was allowed and, after a couple of days at Windsor, a reception at St. James's Palace inaugurated a series of post-nuptial festivities which accurately sounded the national note of welcome. In all of these the Princess engaged herself with an apparently unflagging sense of enjoyment which not even a positive orgy of hand-shaking could quench; only one stipulation was made—a stipulation to be yearly renewed—Holy Week must be quietly spent and the Easter Communion must be carefully prepared for.

The Lord Chamberlain issued invitations to St. James's with a lavish hand, the spacious rooms were thronged and the string of carriages stretched far up Bond Street, but, despite the music supplied by the Queen's private band, it was a dullish affair and may have suggested just how not to do things in the future at Marlborough House. A second party was

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a little more intimate and was enlivened by singers from the Royal Opera House, but what admittedly startled the Princess was the gorgeous entertainment offered to her on the 26th of June by the Brigade of Guards. For this occasion, long premeditated and planned with meticulous care, the picture galleries of the great Kensington Exhibition were requisitioned; the Queen sent decorative tapestry from Buckingham Palace, flags and banners bearing the battle honours of the three regiments floated in the corridors lined by Guardsmen wearing the Crimean Medal; a throne of crimson velvet and gold accommodated the illustrious guests with an Aubusson carpet for their feet; a supper of Gargantuan dimensions and amazing variety was served on "gold," the regimental string bands, then in their infancy, but rehearsed to the hour, provided the music, the Princess,<sup>1</sup> gowned in mauve smothered with white lace, shone peerless through the evening, her only possible rival in the way of beauty being Lady Florence Paget, whose runaway marriage was to be the sensation of the next year. The Duke of Cambridge, as Colonel of the Grenadier Guards, received the guests, assisted by Princess Mary, who found that her popularity was to be if possible increased by the advent of the cousin who adored her. The contents of every famous jewel case in London were exhibits, on the buffet was the famous Flaxman Waterloo shield which the Duke of Wellington had hitherto jealously guarded at Apsley House, and the plate

<sup>1</sup>She wanted to wear a simple wreath of flowers, but in deference to the Prince of Wales's wishes, substituted a diadem of jewels.

## THE GUARDS' BALL

lent by all the great territorial magnates was calculated to be worth £2,000,000 sterling. One officer sat up for two nights to guard this treasure, and unkind rumour had it that he revenged himself for a faithful vigil by removing, at the conclusion of the festivity, some 2,000 wax candle ends for his own domestic purposes. The cost was very large, but as it was shared by over 100 officers, many of whom were well endowed with worldly goods, it was cheerfully borne; forty years later the Blues and Second Life Guards gave balls in Hyde Park Barracks which the Prince and Princess of Wales—the latter clad in a gown of cornflower blue with scarlet poppies—attended, but as here each officer had to provide a sum of nearly seventy pounds, the Commander-in-Chief sternly prohibited any repetition of this form of hospitality.

No less splendid, if rather less "select" than the Guards' Ball, was the function arranged by the City Corporation, when a surprise—which had been rather a secret *de Polichinelle*—awaited the Princess; a moonlight scene revealed the palace of Bernstorff, at rather better than its best, with a sloping lawn, real flowers and pathways, and on the lawn a figure representing the Guest of Honour, which everyone politely pronounced to be lifelike. Dinners were given by the Prime Minister and the Great Houses, and the great Mademoiselle Titiens broke her rule about not appearing at a concert during the opera season in order to appear at the Philharmonic.

Half mourning—although a father-in-law whom she had never seen had been dead for eighteen months—was still observed at Ascot, where a first

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appearance was made in white lace and mauve ribbons, while the "racing correspondents" of the day were emphatic that the Prince of Wales in "a white hat, a richly gemmed horseshoe pin in his scarf, and race-glasses slung across his shoulder looked the beau-ideal of an Ascot visitor."

Then, as the guests of the Dean of Christchurch, there was a visit to Oxford for Commemoration, where the Prince took infinite pride in, as he expressed it, "lionising the Princess" and perhaps some satisfaction in explaining to her how very restricted had been his liberty and how drab his life as an undergraduate; and then came Goodwood and Cowes, and thus was instituted a routine which for nearly forty years was more or less closely followed. Hospitality in the form of both dinners and dances was delightfully returned, and the hospitality at Marlborough House and Sandringham was at once marked by something more than the "rigid dignity without stiffness" which the Queen claimed for the entertainments presided over by herself and Prince Albert. The autumn was devoted to country house life of the more strenuous kind and it was soon evident that a newly married couple had assumed a virtual sovereignty over English Society and that their wishes and tastes would direct a wide circle eager to follow and imitate.

And this year two events occurred to dignify further the position of the Princess of Wales. The death of Frederick VIII, in the early autumn, placed her father on the throne of Denmark as Christian IX, and her second brother William—"a slight, graceful

## THE KING OF THE HELLENES

and elegant boy," as he was described with entire accuracy—having been chosen by the European Powers to be King of the Hellenes, was crowned at Athens under the name of the country's Patron Saint. His sister was unaffectedly pleased and she could readily assent—even if she gave the matter a second thought—to her husband's renunciation of his reversion to the minor sovereignty of Coburg. King George's Crown proved no easy one to bear; from his coronation to his assassination, fifty years later, a thoroughly well-meaning Monarch was faced by difficulties and harassed by troubles, and his chequered fortunes were anxiously watched by his English relatives. The first months of his reign were brightened and made more promising by the cession of the Ionian Islands, a timely gift of which Mr. Gladstone was the chief advocate; without being caught up for an instant in the labyrinth of politics, the Princess could convey to the Liberal statesman her sense of sisterly gratitude and thus forge the first link in a chain of lasting friendship.

But the close of the year was to be embittered by the outbreak of the struggle in which three parties were engaged and which was to issue in an odious triumph of Might over Right. King Christian, on his accession, had promptly asserted—agreeably with the policy of his predecessor—his rights to the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, over which Frederick had ruled subject to a nominal German supervision. Under the Treaty of 1852, Denmark had bought off a claimant to the duchies in the person of Duke Christian, of Schleswig-Holstein-



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Sonderburg-Augustaburg, but his son, Duke Frederick, repudiated the bargain and revived an hereditary claim. His cause was championed by the smaller German States—the Kings of Saxony and Hanover giving forcible proof of their views—and by a small minority in Prussia, restive under Bismarck's heavy hand; Duke Frederick was the close friend alike of the Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia and of Prince Albert's elder brother, the Duke of Coburg, and these united to urge the Queen to uphold the rights of her half nephew.<sup>1</sup> The appeal was wholly in vain: "You overlook the fact," the Queen wrote to her brother-in-law who, in other respects, had been very "trying," "that England is bound to the Treaty of 1852 and the Government here have no other choice but to adhere to it. Our beloved Albert could not have acted otherwise."

The King of Prussia meanwhile, with Bismarck's spur in his side, had induced the Emperor of Austria to join him in expelling the Danes from the disputed territory with the pleasant understanding that they should thereafter be jointly *beati possidentes*.

The Queen was anxious above all to keep peace but there was steadily in her mind the thought that with the duchies in Prussian grasp, the strength and prestige of that kingdom would be materially increased and "to work for a strong Prussia," she had told the Duke of Coburg, was her "sacred duty."

To her Ministers, and especially to her Prime Minister, and to the mass of her people the cause of

<sup>1</sup>The Duke had married the daughter of the Queen's half-sister Feodore.

## THE DUCHIES

Denmark made strong appeal; the threats of Prussia and of Austria seemed to savour of brutality; Russian oppression of Poland and Austrian oppression of Hungary—both of which had provoked the wrath of the Cabinet—were bad enough and had excited something more drastic than adverse comment; the threat to gallant little Denmark was worse if only because the subject came nearer home. Unquestionably popular sentiment was coloured by the fact that a Princess, still in her teens, had been lifted, as it were by a unanimous show of hands, to a pinnacle of popularity for which English history furnishes no parallel and from which history will never seek to displace her. “Bertie and Alix,” King Leopold reminded the Queen, “are constantly before the public in every imaginable shape and character and fill entirely the public mind.” The Princess of Wales most certainly knew that the British Cabinet seriously contemplated armed interference on behalf of her country; she knew even better that in her gnawing anxiety she had her husband’s wholehearted and outspoken sympathy, she knew how defenceless was the country of her birth, and she could not be ignorant of her hold over the country of her adoption—a hold to be immeasurably strengthened in a few months when a happy impending event would be an accomplished fact. The fate of Denmark was at stake and one word from the Danish Princess, to be tossed from lip to lip, would—even if it could have no practical effect—have set many tongues aflame and incurred the deep resentment of the Sovereign.

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But that word was never spoken except when at Windsor, in December, she found herself a fellow guest with the Crown Prince and Princess, who were open-mouthed in their adherence to Duke Frederick's claims, although the Crown Prince, recognising the flimsiness of these, was already arranging to march with the Prussian Army against Denmark. The Princess quietly reminded her English relations that her father was King of Denmark and that the duchies were his by right and could only be wrested from him by force of arms. It was a bomb of simple manufacture which she reluctantly threw down, but it exploded with sufficient force for the Queen to forbid her family to mention Schleswig-Holstein in her presence.

## CHAPTER V

THE New Year was spent at Osborne and the next day the Prince and Princess installed themselves at Frogmore, a Royal, but rather damp, demesne, eminently unsuitable for a winter residence. And that winter was bitterly cold, and so the ice on Virginia Water was in perfect order and the Prince skated morning and afternoon and the Princess, who was by far the better skater of the two, looked on; and then on the 8th of January there was a hockey match in which the Prince disported himself with no mean skill and the Princess was driven about in a sledge; the Blues band, grouped round a charcoal fire, gave a "selection" and ladies and gentlemen from the skating club performed various intricate evolutions in the "swan-like" manner enjoined on Mr. Winkle; it was all very good fun, but at four o'clock the Princess felt a little tired and went home and a little more than four hours later there was born the Heir to the Throne in the second generation.

The event had been timed for mid-March and Marlborough House was to have been the scene of the all-important accouchement; at Frogmore no sort of preparation had been made, there was no nurse, no doctor except the Windsor practitioner who arrived in hot haste just before the baby's first breath was drawn, no baby-linen, and of course no

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Home Secretary. Happily Lord Granville was a guest in the house and could make the necessary official declaration; still more happily, Lady Macclesfield was in-waiting and, being the mother of twelve healthy children, could bring practical knowledge to bear on the subject; homely under-garments were healthily substituted for the sumptuous layette still in the embroiderers' hands, the local doctor rose to the occasion and richly earned his knighthood, and the Court Circular could announce that before 9 p.m. "the Princess and her infant son were doing perfectly well." *The Times* newspaper alluded gracefully to "the New Year's gift which the Princess has presented to the country" and hugged itself with the reflection that "Providence seems to be permitting confusion and gloom to settle on almost every other country in the world and to have chosen to shower on England everything that a people can receive."

The Queen at once set out for Windsor and remained with the young mother until complete recovery was certified. Then, from Osborne, she wrote of the four days as "seeming like a dream, which I love to dwell on although it did not, and could not, bring back my angel." The latter observation was rather obvious but the letter made pleasant reading. "Thank God He has preserved our precious Alix, for that she is, and I can't say how I love her and how glad I shall be to do anything for that sweet dear creature." There was a gentle implication of a reproach in the reminder that "there *was* great danger in such a premature and rapid confinement." And there was of course the devout hope that the

PRINCE ALBERT VICTOR

baby might prove "a real grandson of adored Papa."

As regards the names, so long as Albert was first and Victor second, there was no positive objection to others being added, but if King Christian were a sponsor—it could hardly be otherwise—Uncle Leopold must be another, and Edward might be reserved for a second or third son. The advice was respectfully listened to but only partially adopted, as on the 10th of March, the anniversary of the wedding, the Archbishop of Canterbury named the little Prince Albert Victor Christian Edward.

It was well that the cares of maternity could distract the thoughts of the Princess from the impending perils and eventual humiliation of her country;<sup>1</sup> it was still better that her husband, shedding for the moment political restrictions, and—for once in his life—traversing the Queen's wishes, was in heart and soul in sympathy with her. The Queen, to her son's annoyance, struck out from her speech in the House of Lords the veiled threat to Prussia which Lord Palmerston had slipped in, and substituted a bald phrase about her doing everything possible to bring about a reconciliation between that country and Denmark. "This horrible war," the Prince wrote, "will be a stain for ever on Prussian history, and I think it very wrong of our Government not to have

<sup>1</sup>"I send two lines," the Prince of Wales wrote on February 8th, 1864 to Princess Mary of whose sympathy he was sure, "to beg you, if possible, not to talk *at all* to Alix about the present sad state of affairs in Denmark. Last night she was so much agitated by the telegram I received that I should feel much obliged to you if she commences the conversation, that you would turn it off to something else."

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

interfered before;" and again: "Who cares two pence on the Continent about Lord Russell's everlasting notes? The Foreign Ministers to whom they go probably light their cigars with them."

And when hostilities actually began and anxiety gave place to grief, nothing could exceed the husband's devotion; he scarcely left his wife except to attend to public engagements; he read with her the extracts from despatches which the Queen rather grudgingly allowed to be sent to him; they were happy together whenever Denmark scored some little success, and suffered together when, with the capture of the fortress of Dybbok, Prussia dealt her sturdy little opponent what was practically a knock-out blow.

The Prince of Wales regarded as cold comfort the Queen's well-intentioned remark that it was no disgrace for the Danish troops to retreat before superior forces. Anyhow, he asked with justifiable impatience, could not the Government do something by diplomacy if they would not do anything by force to rescue Denmark? He paid no heed to the angry remarks of the unprepossessing Prussian Ambassador, Count von Bernstorff, as to "the Prince of Wales's Danish partisanship," and on being told that the Emperor Napoleon contemplated some action, the reverse of helpful to Denmark, he sharply reminded the French Ambassador that the Danes were a brave people and ready to meet death rather than humiliation; "if we had sent our Fleet to the Baltic at the beginning of the war," he wrote to his friend Lord Spencer, "all this bloodshed might have been avoided

## PRUSSIA AND DENMARK

and we could cut a much better figure in Europe than we do now."

All this was gall and wormwood to the Queen and to the Prince's German relatives, but to the Princess was sweeter far than honey and the honeycomb. There were to be difficult days, of another sort, in store for her, days which would take toll of her courage and her patience, difficulties against which only a persistent sense of duty would be proof; then she could—as she surely did—remember all that "Bertie" was to her, all that he dared for her, in the hour when a hulking enemy was inflicting upon her people and her country a bitter wrong.

A conference in London lasted for a couple of months but issued—as conferences frequently do—in little but hot air, and although for a fortnight in July the Danes fought pluckily on, an armistice was then the prelude to a peace signed at Vienna which secured to Prussia and Austria the occupation of the Duchies.

The war over, the one wish of the Princess was to go to Denmark and see her parents, and the Prince announced his intention of accompanying her. It seemed a natural, and rather obvious, thing to do but, anyhow, as far as the Prince was concerned, the Queen put in a veto. She had lamented her son's indiscreet championship of Denmark when in his own country; might he not be tempted to repeat his remarks at Copenhagen and perhaps say quite rude things about Prussia? In vain the Prince, who was at Balmoral, protested that he could set a watch over his lips and that his place was surely at his



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

wife's side, in vain he reminded his mother that she could not, year in year out, keep forbidding him to go to Copenhagen; in vain the Princess put in her plea that it would look so odd if her first trip abroad after her marriage, and that to her home, were made alone. The Queen shook her head, she thought the moment inopportune for foreign travel, and matters might have reached a deadlock had not Lord Palmerston gallantly intervened with the suggestion that the Prince must no longer be treated like a schoolboy who could not be trusted to behave himself. The required permission was finally granted on the Prince's written undertaking that he would say no word to which the Queen might conceivably object; the visit must be strictly private, and in order that the feelings of the Queen's eldest daughter should not be lacerated, a subsequent visit was to be paid to Berlin. Having given her consent, the Queen went a step further and said the *Osborne* should take them and their baby, with their special friends Lord and Lady Spencer, and General Knollys, from Dundee to Elsinore; it was the *Osborne* which for forty years they were allowed to consider as their own.

The last three weeks of September were deliciously spent at Fredensborg; the Danish Royal Family were overjoyed to see the English Prince and Princess; the Danish people gave them an enthusiastic reception, but the Prince remembered his promise and, except to his wife, said no word with any flavour of international politics.

The stay at Fredensborg was broken for ten days

## ANOTHER BETROTHAL

with a visit to Stockholm where the King of Sweden, either not knowing or not caring about the Queen's stipulation as to quasi incognito, organised a public reception and insisted on the royal travellers being his guests at the Palace. King Oscar, with French blood in his veins and an inherent dislike of Prussia in his soul, had much to say that was entirely sympathetic; he could talk delightfully on many subjects, he took the Prince out elk-shooting and discussed music with the Princess, and so enjoyable was the experience that the Queen's letter of reproach for this disregard of her special injunction was read with regret but with equanimity.

Back at Fredensborg there was a thrilling bit of news to be heard; just two years ago Alexandra told Dagmar that she thought she was in love with the heir to the British Throne; now Dagmar whispered to Alexandra that the heir to the Tsar of All the Russias had asked her to be his wife and she had said yes. It all sounded very promising; the Prince thought the match "in every way a good one" and readily agreed to the Princess's suggestion that—unless forbidden—they should pay a first visit to Russia the next year and attend the wedding. Fate, not Queen Victoria, was to forbid this; the Grand Duke Nicholas was stricken with mortal illness and died a little while before the date provisionally named for his nuptials.

Both the Prince and Princess would have liked to have seen St. Petersburg and Vienna as well as Stockholm, but Lord Palmerston, to whom they were bound in gratitude to listen, thought it a little too

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

soon to go to Austria and remembered that Russia had been rather rude about the British refusal to help Denmark. His ruling was cheerfully accepted, the more readily as he also ruled Berlin out of the programme, so, after sending the baby back to England, a move was made in October to Hanover. Here also everything was easy and non-political, and among other new acquaintances there was introduced a tall, good-looking young officer of the Austrian Imperial Guard, one Count Hohenstein belonging to the House of Wurtemberg, who had just been created Prince Teck. The Prince and Princess took a great liking to him, and invited him to stay at Marlborough House the following year, little thinking that *der schöner Uhlán*, as he was called, was destined to be the father of another Queen Consort of England.

After Hanover came Darmstadt, where everything again was meant to go very smoothly. Prince Louis, soon himself to be under the Prussian heel, was a good-natured, not-too-German, German, and adored his wife; Princess Alice adored her sister-in-law, and husband and wife agreed beforehand to sink all family differences for the few days; there would be plenty to talk about without mentioning the victor and vanquished in the recent fight. Unfortunately, the Crown Prince arrived in uniform—the Prussian officer is never happy in plain clothes—and on his breast sparkled the medal for bravery displayed on the battlefield of Schleswig. "Bravery, indeed!" was the Prince of Wales's scornful, and quite audible, aside. "It was not pleasant," he wrote, with the Princess at his elbow, to Lord Spencer, "to see him

## HANOVER AND DARMSTADT'

and his A.D.C. always in Prussian uniform and flaunting before our eyes a most objectionable ribbon which he received for deeds of valour against the unhappy Danes."

The Prince thought a few days in Paris would be an agreeable wind-up; he had heard so much of the delights of the town (a few years later he would have tasted many of them) and the Princess would love to see the shops, and he was so anxious she should know the Empress Eugénie, who could tell her anything that was worth knowing about M. Worth and his colleagues; he was quite positive also they would be welcome at Compiègne. But the Ambassador, Lord Cowley, trod heavily on the proposal; he reminded the Prince that the Emperor Napoleon was more touchy about etiquette than any other monarch in Europe, and would never like such illustrious folk to visit him, or his capital, incognito; with a sigh, therefore, the project was abandoned and instead there were spent a few hours at Brussels when the *rayon de soleil* shone once more in an old man's room and Uncle Leopold's shrewd and kindly words of advice were listened to for the last time.

In the early summer of 1865 another event—which Fate proved to be an even more important one—was imminent, and again, like Roman Catholic feasts, was to be anticipated. The evening of June second was marked by one of the more important dinner-parties which the Prince and Princess of Wales delighted to give at Marlborough House, but at the last moment the Royal host was constrained

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

to do the honours alone. The Princess had insisted on attending a Hallé concert—she was beginning to be a devoted musical disciple of the future Sir Charles—and the concert had been very long; she was more than usually tired and must excuse herself to the goodly company which included Count Lagrange, whose Gladiateur had just carried off the Derby stakes to France. Then on every breakfast table the next morning was the official news that Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales had been safely delivered of a son and Queen Victoria could write to the King of the Belgians that “Alix was again confined too soon, but this time only a month, and the child is said to be nice and plump and much larger than Albert Victor.”

The question of names was again acute; the parents plumped for George, but the Queen did not smile on the proposal. The advent of the Georges, she said, was only contemporary with the accession of the House of Hanover, and the last monarch to bear the name had been so very unsatisfactory; to counter this it was submitted that “Edward” had already been employed, that “George” had a good English ring about it, that there was a strong desire to do honour to the Duke of Cambridge who, if only “Uncle George” *à la mode de Bretagne*, was so beloved and had always been “so kind to Alix;” the Patron Saint of England was also aptly quoted, but the Queen’s interest in hagiology was insufficient for her to be influenced by this reminder. Eventually however, the gentle persuasion of the Princess, who prudently forebore to bring forward her own



THE PRINCESS OF WALES, 1867



### PRINCE GEORGE

brother's new name, carried the day, and George was decided on with the distinct proviso that Albert should be added, the Queen being determined that, so long as she lived, "all dearest Papa's male descendants should bear that name." So, on July eighth, the Court Circular could announce that the Prince had been christened in the name of George Frederick Albert, a *communiqué* which excited a Church newspaper to remark with some acidity that "Christian infants are usually baptised in the name of the Trinity."

The christening this time was in the Private Chapel at Windsor, but was clothed with considerable ceremonial; Windsor uniform, a creation of Prince Albert, being prescribed; once more Lady Macclesfield, whose good offices had not this time been requisitioned, handed the infant to the Queen, who in turn passed him to the Archbishop; Royalty mustered in force, and the Danish, Saxon and Hanoverian Ministers represented their Sovereigns in happy ignorance that within a year the kingdom of Hanover would have ceased to exist; the Communion table with its show of plate looked more like a gorgeous buffet than an altar, and the combined choir from Her Majesty's Chapel and St. George's rendered effectively, if a trifle inappropriately, a chorale for which the Prince Consort was responsible, and which opened pleasantly with:

In life's gay morn ere sprightly youth  
By vice and folly is enslaved.



## CHAPTER VI

FOR Prince Bismarck the seizure of the Duchies was only a stepping stone; he aimed at the hegemony of Central Europe, just as his rebellious pupil, the Kaiser, by no less brutal measures, forty years later was aiming at the hegemony of Europe itself. Austria had helped the German Chancellor to tear territory from the side of Denmark, but for Austria he had now no further use and, in order to make this clear, he tore up the scrap of paper, known as the Gastein Treaty, which assigned Holstein to Austria and then truculently claimed both Duchies for Prussia. This course of action exasperated the Queen no less than the Prince and Princess and, for once, the Queen saw eye to eye with her son and daughter-in-law. Her advocacy of a strong Prussia was checked by the reflection that a war between Prussia and Austria must mean civil war within her family circle. She read, and re-read, a letter from her second daughter<sup>1</sup> with its tearful appeal: "War would be too fearful to contemplate, brother against brother, friend against friend. If there is war and Louis is away, what shall I do? Louis having only a brigade could not keep out of danger, like Fritz at Schleswig." Here was rather a nasty slap at Fritz's medal for bravery, but this the

<sup>1</sup>Princess Louis of Hesse.

## PRUSSIAN AGGRESSION

Queen ignored, and seizing her pen, poured out her heart to the King of Prussia. "As you value the lives of thousands," she entreated her, "Beloved Brother," "as you value the sacred trust which, as a Sovereign, you have in your keeping of maintaining the peace of the world; and if you have any regard for the memory of him who was your friend, my beloved husband, pause before you permit so fearful an act as the commencement of a war, the responsibility of which will rest on *you alone*, to be committed." But the memory of Prince Consort and every other consideration weighed as dust against Prince Bismarck's determination that there should be one—and only one—Great Power in Germany; Italy having promised to lend a hand and attack Austria so soon as the first Prussian shot was fired, the war clouds grew daily heavier, and in mid-May the Austrian Ambassador, in happy ignorance of how largely superior was the Prussian to the Austrian artillery, told the Princess of Wales that there was no possible chance of averting a clash of arms.

Early in June Prussia seized Holstein and presented to Hanover the same outrageous ultimatum which was offered to Belgium some forty-eight years later and with precisely the same result. Von Moltke's strategy was the efficient handmaid of Bismarck's policy and, although Italy proved of moderate value in the field, the battle of Sadowa on the 5th of July brought to an end a contest which had been uneven from the start.

The terms of the Treaty of Prague added further bitter drops to the cup which the Princess had tasted

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

two years earlier. Not only did Hesse-Darmstadt pass into Prussian hands while Hanover was taken at a gulp, but Hesse-Cassel, where she had found a second home, was no longer to be the domain of her uncle, but an incorporated Prussian province. Again, so far as is within public knowledge, a Great Lady remained silent, even when her Prussian sister-in-law, almost tauntingly, wrote: "They were told beforehand what they would have to expect;" but through the ensuing decades indignation smouldered in her breast, the very word "Prussia" would cause her to clench her teeth and, fifty years later, she could murmur to a humble friend, who had lost in the Great War what he most prized in the world, of "crushing those hateful Huns." Her Hessian relations were scarcely less stricken, and day after day the Princess would cross from Marlborough House to St. James's where Princess Mary's arms were wide open to her, where she would listen, not without satisfaction, to Uncle George's fierce denunciation of the statesman who was a master of craft no less than a man of blood and iron, and where she would soothe her great aunt, the old Duchess of Cambridge,<sup>1</sup> who wailed that "All the dearest countries that my heart loved best have been stolen."

As in 1864, so in 1866, the Prince wholeheartedly and undisguisedly espoused the cause of Denmark, and he could point out to the Princess that one

<sup>1</sup>The Duchess was directly descended from Henry, Duke of Brabant, whose wife, in the 13th century, received by treaty the Landgravate of Hesse: a little later Hesse was acknowledged as part of the then German Empire and to its Regent was accorded the status of an Electoral Prince.

## NORTHERN SCHLESWIG

clause in the Treaty of Prague gave Denmark the hope of recovering some portion of her stolen goods. The Emperor Napoleon, who had consented to act as negotiator and who had taken the Prince into his confidence at every point, was insistent to insert that Schleswig should be ceded to Prussia only on the explicit understanding "that the people of the northern district of Schleswig, if by free vote they expressed a wish to be united to Denmark, shall be ceded to Denmark." Politics, whether domestic or international, formed a book which the Princess did not often open, but here her affections were concerned as much as her sense of right and wrong, and, year in year out, she reminded her husband, who was no less eager than herself, of an obligation definitely accepted if flagrantly disregarded. In vain did the inhabitants of Northern Schleswig plead again and again for a plebiscite, in vain did the Prince remind his Prussian brother-in-law of Schleswig's treaty right of self-determination, Bismarck was stolidly deaf to the cry for justice, cared little, in 1870, whether Denmark might rashly rush in on the side of France, and finally, after the Berlin Conference, ridded himself of further importunities by bargaining with Austria that Germany should support her pretensions to Bosnia-Herzegovina if Austria would allow him to annul the annoying proviso.

"As it is a matter which chiefly concerns my wife's country," the Prince of Wales wrote to Lord Salisbury early in 1879, "I ask if this story is true and, if so, it only shows how little faith we can place in

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Austria with regard to the observation of treaties." A quarter of a century later King Edward was to get painful proof of Austria's slender regard for treaties, and to give Francis Joseph a rap over his Imperial knuckles with: "*Je ne te cacherai pas que je tiens beaucoup aux principes consacrés dans le Protocole du 17 Janvier, 1878.*"

He was not to be silenced now; he reproached the British Government with passive indifference to a gross breach of faith, and he returned to the charge once more when, after the brief reign of his brother-in-law, he excited the ire of his haughty nephew by reminding him that if his father had remained in power, an acute sense of justice would surely have issued in righting a great wrong.

King Edward had been at rest for nine years, and for four long years blood had flowed in torrents before the burning wish which he carried to his grave was to be fulfilled. The clumsy terms of the Treaty of Versailles probably lay outside Queen Alexandra's geographical grasp and in this respect she was certainly not alone; but her veteran servant and friend<sup>1</sup> could draw her attention to one point in the agreement and, in so doing, draw tears of gladness from her eyes. Article 109 of 1919 revived effectually the Napoleonic clause of the Treaty of 1866; an immediate translation of territory was effected as a *beau geste*, and only a few months elapsed before a plebiscite was held in Northern Schleswig and, as a result, in May 1920, all, except a doubtful strip of the Province, was handsomely handed over to Denmark.

<sup>1</sup>Sir Dighton Probyn.

## CHAPTER VII

EARLY in 1867 rumour—not in this instance a lying jade—ran that all was not well with the Princess of Wales. Another “happy event” was impending, but this prospect was quite insufficient to satisfy eager inquirers or to silence uninformed gossip, and anxiety was stimulated rather than allayed by a tardy statement, on the 18th of February, that the Princess was suffering from acute rheumatism, with the stock sentence tacked on to it that there was “no cause for anxiety.” But if the pronouncement was belated, the birth of the future Princess Royal three days later was premature and the Home Secretary could not be fetched in time to bear his official witness to the happening.

Information as to illustrious patients was often only allowed to dribble out, although Queen Victoria herself was never reticent as to the physical wearinesses and weaknesses which assailed her, but it soon became an open secret that the Princess was suffering acutely from an affection to her knee. The doctors opined that high fever had induced premature birth and they hoped—hope springs eternal in the medical breast when the fees are high—that the confinement might curtail the duration of the rheumatic attack; having been disappointed in this respect they began to shake their heads and let

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

it be known that recovery must be necessarily slow.

Marlborough House was besieged by anxious inquirers, especially on the anniversary of the wedding day, and everyone wanted the Princess to "try" something; besides a bulging postbag every few hours, there was a steady stream of bottles of embrocation, rolls of oilsilk, felt pads and every sort and size of splint. The medical sages were moved to vent in the Press their indignation that "rumours are afloat as unfounded as they are extraordinary;" their patient would have for a while to submit to mechanical support such as to limit movement of the joint which had been so severely attacked by rheumatism, but the medical bulletins, the public were assured, had throughout been entirely candid and no apprehension need be aroused by the announced intention of the Queen of Denmark to pay her daughter a visit. Queen Louise duly arrived in London, to be followed two days later by King Christian, and Queen Victoria, who had come up to London for a Court, went to see her at Marlborough House, a little warmth being infused into their usually tepid relations by their common interest in the sickroom where progress was slow and painful. Then in mid-April came a serious relapse, and Sir James Paget and Mr. Prescott Hewett, the leading physician and surgeon of the day, frankly published that the healing process had been rudely stopped by fever and severe inflammation, and that unhappily the malady of the knee joint was likely to recur.

On the 15th of April the centre pages of *The Times*

## ILLNESS OF THE PRINCESS

newspaper recorded in large type the accouchement of Princess Helena,<sup>1</sup> but a disquieting report had been whispered the day before and people hurriedly turned over the sheets to read with dismay that, as regards the Princess who was their idol, no progress had been made, that chloroform had to be administered to prevent the pain caused by the exquisitely tender knee joint and that the persistence of the inflammation was baffling to the last degree; a rider, calculated to serve as a sort of journalistic syrup, was added that the Princess retained all her genial characteristics, and was as ready to be amused and as kindly and as vivacious as ever. As a matter of fact within a few days, something like real recovery could be cheerfully and truthfully announced, and on the 10th of May the Princess found herself able to be present at the christening of Princess Louise in her drawing-room; she could also persuade the Prince that she was quite well enough for him to fulfil his engagements in Paris where the Great Exhibition was in full swing and where every Sovereign, except the Queen of England and the Pope of Rome, were to enjoy Napoleon's lavish hospitality as a token that, at long last, they regarded the Emperor of the French to be on a par with themselves.

Among the potentates gathered in Paris were the Tsar of Russia, the Sultan of Turkey and the Khedive of Egypt; all three hankered to come to

<sup>1</sup>Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein. The marriage of the Queen's third daughter to the brother of Duke Frederick had given great umbrage to Bismarck; the Duke had been deprived of his properties and Prince Christian had been compelled to retire from the Prussian Army.



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

London and the Sultan was avowedly desirous to compare the splendours of the Tuileries which he had tasted with those of Buckingham Palace of which he only knew by hearsay. The Queen was not in a mood to welcome visits of State; true she had invited the Queen of Prussia and the Empress Eugénie to spend a few summer days at Windsor and Osborne, but this was her private concern, and Queen Augusta was "such a true and devoted friend as she was of Albert, and talked so wisely about German politics." In vain Lord Derby reminded his Sovereign how *The Times* newspaper not long ago had stressed the contrast between the royal and rousing receptions given to the Prince and Princess of Wales abroad and her own inclination to allow illustrious visitors to London to board themselves in hotels. The Queen retorted that in her widowhood she "never invited Sovereigns to come;" the Tsar was thus unhesitatingly shut out, but he had not been explicit on the subject and therefore need not be offended by having the Garter forwarded to him in Paris without any circumlocution. But as regards the Sultan, the Foreign Minister's persuasions bore down his Sovereign's opposition with the rather far-fetched reservation that she did not "invite" him but only "acquiesced in a proposal of his own to come here." The Khedive, it was understood, must shift for himself.

A Naval review at Spithead with all its pictorial possibilities was to be held in the Sultan's honour, but this not till half way through his visit, and the Queen proposed to postpone exchange of personal

## THE SULTAN

courtesies with him until then. The Prince of Wales stepped into the breach; he rehearsed the attentions which Napoleon had paid to the Sultan in Paris, he reminded the Queen that he himself had some experience of Oriental potentates, he urged that the Sultan's coming was of "a general public character" and that it would indeed be "bad policy on our part if we affronted him in any way;" by letter and word of mouth a diplomatist to his finger tips so worked on the Queen's feelings that she nobly decided to defer her departure to the Isle of Wight for a couple of days and receive the Monarch at Windsor.

The Sultan duly arrived on the 11th of July, but the Princess was still insufficiently recovered to play her part in the round of festivities which marked his stay and which were indefatigably led by the Prince. A little stand was erected for her in the garden of Marlborough House, and from the same vantage ground where for fifty years she constantly watched the changing of the Guard at St. James's Palace, she witnessed the procession as it filed past from Charing Cross to Buckingham Palace, and waved her greeting to the Sultan, who hastened to call upon her and bid her welcome to Constantinople whenever she felt so disposed.

The Princess made sure it was clearly understood how much she would have enjoyed the functions as well as the fêtes, and she thought the Queen and Princess Mary "so right" to kiss Izad Effendi, the Heir Apparent, at Windsor, although that young gentleman was a little taken aback by the procedure, but the gorgeous ball given by the Indian Council—

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

for which the Government of India footed the bill—the Great Review at Wimbledon, when the Sultan bestrode an enormous white horse, the Gala at Covent Garden and the Banquet at Stafford House, were robbed of all she would have lent them; nor to her sincere regret, could she be present when, on board the *Victoria and Albert* rocking under a gale, the Sultan—during a brief interval between paroxysms of sea-sickness—was invested very expediently, but a little illogically, with the Supreme Order of Chivalry.

German baths were the usual pre-War panacea for almost every ill to which the flesh is heir, and in August the Princess was carried on board the *Osborne* in a sedan chair and, with her husband and children, steamed from Woolwich to Dordrecht *en route* to Wiesbaden. The "cure" was about as successful as stereotyped cures generally are, and in October Princess Louis of Hesse could write from Darmstadt of the delights of a visit from her brother and sister-in-law, and that "Alix could walk upstairs with the help of two sticks although her knee is still stiff." The King of Prussia had also paid her a visit and "Alix was pleased with his civility." "The meeting," Queen Victoria was told, "had been satisfactory to both parties; bearing ill-will is always a mistake besides not being right." This was a most laudable text which, to do her justice, the writer herself had striven to follow, with fine contempt for Lord Macaulay's dictum that "before we extol anyone for a forgiving temper inquiry should be

## THE 1ST DECEMBER

made whether the individual is above, or below, revenge."

As was the custom for over forty years, the special friends of the Princess were invited to spend the 1st of December at Sandringham, and she wrote of "a very happy birthday" and "I was delighted to have my darling husband here and not like last year when he was in Russia."

Throughout her long illness she would speak as little as possible of its attendant pain and discomfort. This was characteristic; her husband, her children (these especially), her household, her dogs, her horses, her abundant charities were all matter for close and careful consideration, but to her own ailments, which admittedly were few and far between, she would pay scant attention.

But the rheumatism had left an indelible mark: she was a bold and skilful horsewoman, and for more than a quarter of a century would still be a forward figure in the hunting field. But her beautiful mares, Victoria and Viva, and their successors, must now carry their mistress on the "reverse" side; she lost nothing of her grace in the ballroom, but the partners she summoned for round dances, Prince Louis of Battenberg,<sup>1</sup> "Harry" Chaplin,<sup>2</sup> Montague Guest,<sup>3</sup> Oliver Montagu<sup>4</sup> were all men of stature, while the swish of the silken skirts forbade any suggestion

<sup>1</sup>Created Marquis of Milford Haven 1917.

<sup>2</sup>Created Viscount Chaplin 1916.

<sup>3</sup>Brother to 1st Lord Wimborne.

<sup>4</sup>4th son of 7th Earl of Sandwich.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

that one knee was less supple than its fellow. Just as a really great singer can conceal any inroad Time has made in vocal resources, so a close observer might well fail to detect any trace of the slightest disability, and it was left to the Princess to bear with smiling disregard any after-effects of a cruel fever.

Mr. Disraeli was not alone among Queen Victoria's Ministers to think, and say, that a Royal residence in Ireland, with a Prince of the blood in occupation, might do something to check the growth of Irish disaffection and would do much to invigorate the spirit of Irish loyalty. Throughout her reign the Queen spent less than five weeks in the Emerald Isle, and during fifty of her sixty-three years of rule, never set foot there at all. Yet on the three occasions when she visited Ireland with her husband and son, popular satisfaction was scarcely less manifest than when, in superb defiance of fatigue and risk, she crossed the Irish Channel in 1900. Realising that they were not likely to be favoured again with a sight of the Sovereign, the Irish were just now eager to have a view of the Princess of Wales and to make sure for themselves that the glowing reports they had received of her were not exaggerated. The international Exhibition of Arts and Industry fixed for the spring of 1867 seemed to offer an admirable opportunity to realise their wishes, and the Prince, in accepting for himself the invitation to open the Exhibition, feared that his visit "will be considered rather flat" as the Princess could not accompany

## IRELAND

him (on account of her approaching confinement). The visit, however, although only semi-official, so entirely secured expressions of Irish good humour that Mr. Disraeli, on assuming office in 1868, pressed the Queen with considerable persistence to permit both the Prince and Princess to be the guests of the Marquis of Abercorn,<sup>1</sup> whom he had nominated as Viceroy; the idea prominent in his mind that there might be thus paved the way anyhow for more frequent contact between the Irish people and the Royal House. The Queen had her misgivings; she was in the first place annoyed because her representative, through his eldest son, who was the Prince's equerry, had "sounded" the Prince and Princess before the idea was submitted to her. She feared the Prince might be used for political purposes and she was not altogether pleased with her son's reminder that during two centuries British Sovereigns had, all told, only passed twenty-one days in Ireland; questions of health, even other people's health, always weighed with her, and she was not certain if the Princess were sufficiently recovered from her illness to undergo the fatigue. But on this point the Princess was explicit and aptly reminded the Queen that she had just been quite able to stand through an unusually long drawing-room. Fenianism was of course stalking abroad, and she knew that a certain amount of risk would attach to the visit, but that risk she was determined to take. The Queen gradually gave way; she was attracted by the idea of the Prince being installed as

<sup>1</sup>Created Duke of Abercorn and Marquis of Hamilton August 1868.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

a Knight of St. Patrick, and she was pleased with his promise to treat the occasion quite seriously and do all he could "in any small way to strengthen the Crown and Government with regard to the Irish question;" she even allowed herself to be wholly satisfied with his explanation that attendance at Punchestown Races, which she had at first thought most undesirable, would give a large concourse of people an opportunity "to display their loyalty to you and our Family."

So on the 15th of April the Prince and Princess landed at Kingstown and for nine days thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The ovations in the crowded streets were scarcely punctuated by any manifestation of ill-will; the installation—a most colourful ceremonial—took place in the renovated St. Patrick's Cathedral, and was the precise converse of the occasion, some forty years later, when a recommendation pressed upon King Edward was so unpopular that the Knights refused to attend the investiture of their new colleague; the statue of Edmund Burke was unveiled and the Prince, though not very conversant with his works, spoke of him as one of Ireland's greatest statesmen; there was a review in Phoenix Park, two days' racing at Punchestown, a State dinner when the Prince composed every word of his own speech and delivered it without a note, there was a Ball at the Mansion House which was very hot and crowded but the Princess sent for "just the right men" to dance the square dances with her, the Prince indulged the populace with a green tie whenever he appeared in plain clothes, and

## A CURE

the Princess wore Irish poplin<sup>1</sup> with a *mantilla* of Irish lace on every possible occasion.

And if the days were crowded to the last minute there was time for a little example of faith-healing; at the Viceregal Lodge the youngest son of the house, a child of some eight summers, was tormented by warts on his hands which had been rendered the more unsightly by a crude application of caustic. The Princess examined the little hands with infinite care, listened to the pitiful story of a small boy much ashamed of his complaint, and then went through a short but solemn rite of hazel twigs. Whether *post hoc* or *propter hoc*, the horrid little excrescences on Lord Ernest Hamilton's palms began to disappear from that day and never showed any tendency to return; a dozen years later, at Baron's Court, a young cavalry officer was asked: "Where are the warts?" to reply that a magic touch had dispersed them.

"You should come over yourself," was the Prince's last message to the Queen before leaving Dublin, "and convince and satisfy yourself of the force of the affectionate feeling." More than thirty years would elapse before the advice was followed, and then the visit to Dublin, if undoubtedly a triumph of splendid old age, brought into high relief earlier, and protracted, neglect.

<sup>1</sup>The Princess, wishing to let the Irish know she had not forgotten them, appeared in the same dress for the Cup Day at Ascot she had worn at Punchestown, and drew from one of her family the comment that "dear Alix was looking a little less than her very best in a green gown trimmed with yellowish Irish point lace and a white bonnet with shamrock."



## *QUEEN ALEXANDRA*

Then, in July, on the morrow of a great concert at the Crystal Palace where the Princess listened to Patti at her best, occurred the birth of the daughter<sup>1</sup> who year in, year out, in sunshine or under cloud, was to be her mother's constant companion and unfailing helpmate.

<sup>1</sup>Princess Victoria born 6th July.



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## CHAPTER VIII

AND if Ireland had been given a sop in the spring, France was to be soothed in the autumn. Queen Victoria travelling, in August, to Switzerland as Countess of Kent, had accepted the offer of the Imperial train, and the Empress Eugénie, at some inconvenience, had gone to Paris to greet the Queen at the British Embassy where she was resting for a few hours. The French Press, whether or no Imperially inspired, had, a month later, rather sharply commented on the fact that the Queen on her return journey had not been at the trouble to return the call; if Queen Victoria, it was rather sourly observed, could receive the Empress as Countess of Kent, she could also, as Countess of Kent, make *acte de présence* at the Tuileries, or she could have invited the Empress to join her in her afternoon stroll through the Gardens at St. Cloud.

Early in the year the Emperor, hearing that the Princess was at the moment far from strong, had offered her his house in Algiers, where the warmth of the climate, he assured her, would be greatly beneficial; the suggestion was smiled on but could not then be adopted. In the early autumn Napoleon and Eugénie put out further pressing proposals and it was arranged that the Prince and Princess should spend a few days at Compiègne in November on their way farther afield.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

The visit "went off" with entire success, the only *contretemps* being a rather ugly fall which the Prince took in the course of a showy, but rather unsportsmanlike, *chasse à courre*; any little soreness caused by the Queen's unconscious neglect, which had been felt, vanished under the seemingly effortless effect which the Princess created, even the rather formidable Princesse Mathilde falling to a frankness and disingenuity which she found irresistible. Napoleon's cousin, who might have been Napoleon's bride, had a rather illogical dislike to the English; she had hated her Russian husband, but, perhaps out of affection for the Tsar who had released her from her marriage ties, she bore ill-will to the English who, in the Crimean campaign, had fought the Russians to a finish. The Prince of Wales she always excepted; "he is open," she said, "he says what he has in his heart and is not like other princes who have always the air of having something to conceal," and this stormy scion of the House of Bonaparte now included the Princess in the limited category of her likings.

Seven months later, on the return journey from the East, the Princess would meet Princesse Mathilde again when, as the guest of the Emperor and Empress she tasted for the first and last time of the splendour of the Tuileries, and where she herself fairly outshone all the beautiful women who figured on Winterhalter's canvas. The Prince then had much converse with Marshal MacMahon; he relished the brilliant talk of the Austrian Ambassadress, Princess Metter-

## THE TUILERIES

nich, who led the revels of the Court, and he took a strong, and lasting, liking to the dashing cavalry officer, the Marquis de Galliffet; through the Marquise, whose nimble wit was not the least of her many attractions, the Princess first made the acquaintance of Mrs. Standish, a veritable grande dame of purely Legitimist principles, the prototype of all that is meant by *élégance* and who later could claim to be one of the four ladies, outside the Household, whom the Princess admitted to closest friendship. Mary, Duchess of Abercorn, Gladys, Marchioness of Ripon and Adelaide, Countess of Brownlow might be quoted as the other three.

At Balmoral the Queen was always more open to persuasion than anywhere else, and she would occasionally even allow herself the luxury of not quite knowing her own mind. So at Balmoral, in September, the Prince and Princess disclosed to her their wish to spend the winter abroad and travel to the Near East. From the Duke of Sutherland the Prince had heard of the vast influence which the Suez Canal, now approaching completion, would have on British trade; he was very anxious to see this staggering feat of engineering for himself, and he thought it would be only polite to repay at Constantinople the Sultan's visit to London; the Princess was feeling a little homesick, perhaps because she had not shaken off the effects of her illness, and she was longing to spend Christmas with her parents and then go and see her brother at Athens; there had been afloat silly, and grossly exaggerated,

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

stories about high play indulged in by the Prince and some ill-informed murmurs as to the fastness of certain of the favoured acquaintances who were forming the Marlborough House set; anyhow, husband and wife both wanted to get away for a while, and they told the Queen the plain truth, to meet with an unexpectedly ready, though qualified, assent.

All items of their itinerary were to be submitted for the Queen's consideration; they must go nowhere without her specific consent; they must travel incognito and only visit "family" courts except—but this required further consideration—Austria, and perhaps Sweden; the Sundays must be observed as days of rest and not given to amusement. Had Victoria forgotten that the Prince Consort, when commending the Prince of Wales to Duke Ernest of Coburg, wrote: "We have nothing against his going to the theatre on Sunday, only he *must* go to Church in the morning"? The conditions were cheerfully accepted and obeyed in the spirit if not in the letter, and on the 17th of November a joyous group of father, mother and three children set out for Copenhagen<sup>1</sup> *via* Paris and Cologne.

There had been a rather unnecessary protest on this point: "I cannot give my consent," the Queen wrote to her son, "to the two boys going to Copenhagen until you have consulted the two physicians as to whether a journey so far north across the sea is advisable; they are the children of the country and I shall be blamed for allowing *risk* to be run. The

<sup>1</sup>The children, under the charge of Lady Carmarthen and General Knollys, were sent back to England from Copenhagen.

two babies are totally out of the question. Pray show this to Alix." But the Princess was first of all a mother and had been no less careful than the Queen; the physicians had already given their opinion that neither for two healthy little boys nor for the elder of the two "babies" was any risk involved in a short trip overseas.

In attendance were Mrs. Grey, whose pretty Swedish accent particularly appealed to her kindly mistress, perhaps because that kindly mistress was quite aware of her own pretty Danish accent, Colonel Teesdale and Captain Ellis, a Guards officer who had fought finely in the Crimea, while two friends, Lord Carrington and Mr. Oliver Montagu, both Cornets in the Royal Horse Guards, were attached to the party.

Both these men were true to type, alike in appearance and also of all that is meant by a British officer and gentleman. The one retired early from military service; the other remained to command his regiment. One was a Radical against whom the crustiest Tory could have no grudge: the other was a staunch Conservative. Both were admitted into the very inmost circle of intimates at Marlborough House and to both the Prince and Princess would often look, and never look in vain, for information as to happenings in the outer world and for advice which was always based on shrewd common sense and never flavoured with flattery.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Oliver Montagu came" a very distinguished visitor wrote from Dunrohi Castle in 1876, "his devotion to the Princess is proof of a loyal friendship as well as of a romantic and chivalrous devotion to a good and beautiful woman."



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

The Prince of Wales went for a few days to Stockholm, where he was persuaded by King Charles to be initiated into the Order of Freemasons; he was back in time to enjoy all that was meant by Christmas and New Year festivities at Fredensborg, and so enjoyed himself as to be sorry when the moment came to set out on the tour when, despite maternal restrictions, he and the Princess would certainly be the central figures in a series of varied demonstrations.

Berlin was an item in the programme on which the Queen had insisted; it was a pill the Princess had to swallow without making a wry face, and it was scarcely sweetened by Prince Bismarck's appearing at the State Banquet with the Order of the Dannebrog on his broad chest. But the Crown Prince and Princess did their best to make things easy, and between the Crown Princess and the Princess of Wales there was inaugurated a friendship to grow closer and warmer in later years; the King gave a Ball in the White Hall of the Palace, where everything was "very well done;" the two days allotted for the visit passed quickly and smoothly, and on the evening of the 20th of January, after a bitterly cold journey, the Royal train steamed into Vienna. The Queen had rather reluctantly recognised that to visit the Prussian and not the Austrian capital might be construed into an "unfriendly" act, but she did not perhaps quite realise that when his visitors were of Royal blood, Francis Joseph had no use for incognito. There he was on the platform in full uniform with all the Archdukes who could be mustered, and there also were seen the British Ambassadors.

## FRANCIS JOSEPH

sador, the Danish Minister, and a gorgeous entourage, and at the Bourg the Empress Elizabeth, with a bevy of ladies, was waiting to receive the heir to the British Throne and his Consort.

Six days were allotted to Vienna and every moment was filled. The Austrian etiquette was rather overpowering and there were State and *familien* dinners at preposterous hours, a beautiful ballet and a poor performance of "Don Juan" at the Opera; there was dancing, shopping, skating and sight-seeing, but the two memories which the Princess retained most happily were the Imperial stables with the 500 horses (which appealed to her more than the 600 carriages, although some of these had been touched up by Rubens); and the small concert at Prince Hohenlohe's house where the brothers Strauss gave her a taste of their music at first hand. On one thing she insisted; a visit must be paid to the King and Queen of Hanover,<sup>1</sup> and to Hietzing the Prince and Princess and their suite were conveyed in four carriages, each drawn by six horses, to find the victims of Prussian violence enduring, with no complaint on their lips but with a bitter taste in their mouths, the sorry lot of *rois en exil*.

And there was to be the healing of a sore place;

<sup>1</sup>Leave for this *démarche* had probably not been asked, and might only have been grudgingly granted. "The Queen was always anti-Hanoverian," Queen Sophie of Holland wrote to Lady Derby. The statement may have been accurate but anyhow the Queen had a very tender feeling for Princess Frederica whom she called the Lily of Hanover; her marriage to the blind King's equerry took place in the Private Chapel at Windsor and the Queen gave the bride away, but the Prince and Princess of Wales did not attend the ceremony.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Count Beust painfully remembered that in 1864, when accredited to the Court of St. James, the coldest courtesy was all that he could expect, and all he received, from the Princess of Wales and her Hessian relations; now Austria had been dismembered in the same rough fashion as Denmark, fellow suffering had induced sympathy, and the Austrian Foreign Minister could be told how much it was hoped that he would find himself once more, and more happily, at his former post.

The time had come for a new and delicious experience. The Queen had ordered the *Ariadne* to be fitted up as a yacht with special provision for the comfort of the Princess, and from the *Ariadne*—after a swift passage from Trieste—the Royal party disembarked at Alexandria on the 3rd of February to proceed in a luxurious special train to the Viceroy's private station opposite the Kasr-el-Nil Gardens.

Khedive Ismail had heard how splendidly his uncle had entertained the Prince of Wales seven years earlier; he nobly forgot that on his recent visit to England he had enjoyed the hospitality, not of Buckingham Palace but of Dudley House, and as money was outside his consideration, he determined to show the future Queen of England how things could be done in Egypt.

Into the Ezbekieh Palace he had poured bedsteads of solid silver, couches which sounded—for him anyhow—the last note of luxury, curtains of richest silk, mirrors set in costly frames, and carpets which would have made Lord Kitchener's mouth water; gardeners had been busy trying to force flowers into

## CAIRO

the patches of sandy soil outside the Palace windows, chefs had been summoned from Paris, stores sufficient for a garrison had been laid in, and dancers and a menagerie had been requisitioned; it was all rather gorgeous but rather chilly, especially for the unfortunate member of the suite who had to occupy an apartment with a marble floor, which no rug must hide, to tread on, and a fountain in the middle which, with some difficulty, was induced to cease from playing at night.

But it was all new to the Princess and she was determined to see everything *couleur de rose*. She was amused by the French play on the first night but was "so sorry for" the ladies of the harem who sat in the box opposite hers behind a lattice work which no opera glass could penetrate; the procession of the Holy Carpet was thrilling but she was a little nervous lest any mishap should befall the crowds who thronged to see her no less than to take part in the annual ceremony; she was delighted with the syces, in their white linen and red velvet who ran in front of the carriage and, had time allowed, would have spent hours in the Turkish Bazaar and the Gold Bazaar.

The dinner given for her by the Grande Princesse, the Viceroy's mother, was a little "trying;" the guest of honour wielded, as if to the manner born, the tortoiseshell and coral spoon which replaced knife and fork; she tasted the sausage omelette, the compounds of vermicelli and sugar, and of rosewater and tapioca, she skilfully evaded the onion dipped in gravy which one of the Eastern Princesses was

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

anxious she should sample, and she realised just in time that the liquid offered in a tortoiseshell cup was vinegar flavoured with herbs. Perhaps a very dainty lady heaved a sigh of satisfaction when the moment came to dip her slender fingers in a silver bowl and wipe them on a gold-embroidered towel, but for two hours after this ineffable meal she exchanged *phrases de cérémonie*, she inspected every room in the house, the Princesse waddling before and after her, she regretted seemingly no less than her hostess that the custom of the country forbade the old Princesse to pay her a return visit, she "left open" the suggestion that she herself should come again on her return to Cairo, and she left the whole party grinning widely to show their delight and admiration, having tried to tap her on the shoulder as a token of affection.

For the river expedition the Viceroy's arrangements were no less lavish; a flotilla of river craft preceded and followed the dahabeah, gracefully named the *Alexandra*, which was fitted up with blue and gold—rather too much gold—and astern of the party steamed the Duke of Sutherland with the famous traveller, Sir Samuel Baker, the no less famous naturalist, Professor Owen, and the eminent engineer, Sir John Fowler, a trio who added a very appreciable weight of learning to the occasion.

The trip lasted over a month, and to the Princess nothing came amiss; she apparently made friends with the curiously ugly and over-painted and bejewelled wife of the Greek sugar manufacturer at Minieh, allowed herself to be really patted on the shoulder and swallowed without wincing a tumbler of

## THE NILE

rose-water; she declined a dromedary but the long donkey rides in the desert never seemed to tire her, even when the saddles were poorly stuffed; she had scarcely heard of Rameses and was quite vague as to when or where he—or they—lived, but Thebes was to enchain her memory; she was perhaps more interested in the caravan camp at Korosko and the little destitute Nubian boy she took on board at Wadi Halfa and brought home than in the temples at Philae and Abu Simbel; but she was radiant when the Prince shot a crocodile, she sympathised with the women at a funeral, especially with the “poor mother” who kept her head under the sheet which covered the corpse, and although the further Cataracts were outside her working knowledge of the waters of the Nile she was quite reluctant to turn back from Wadi Halfa.

At the beginning of the year the Queen had roundly told Lord Clarendon<sup>1</sup> that even if apparently impending hostilities between Turkey and Greece were averted, it would be highly undesirable for any one of her Family to visit Athens “considering what the conduct of Greece has been.” Whether or no the Princess resented the obvious fact that her parents and her brother were viewed with little favour by the Queen, she was anyhow avowedly glad to hear, as the Royal party came down stream, that Turkey and Greece had composed their differences and that the Sovereign had been persuaded to withdraw her objections to the contemplated stay in Constantinople and Athens.

<sup>1</sup>Foreign Minister.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Another week was spent in Cairo; the Pyramids were inspected and the Prince, hot and dusty, climbed to their summit while the Princess tried, not quite successfully, to grasp their meaning; the feast of Beiram was marked by another visit—this time happily not to a meal—to the Grande Princesse; when a native singer of repute, plastered with jewels, displayed all the resources of an atrocious voice; there were races quite unworthy of the beautifully turned out charabancs, with postilions and outriders, in which the Prince and Princess drove to the course; there were more donkey rides through the bazaars, another Viceregal banquet, and then the Canal having been duly, if by the Princess rather perfunctorily, inspected, the *Ariadne*, under escort, steamed on the 30th of March for Constantinople. Two days later the Prince and Princess, having transferred to the Sultan's yacht, passed the entrance to the Golden Horn and landed beside the Salah Palace which was to be their lodging.

The Sultan, no less than the Viceroy, was determined to play up; his taste being a little more restrained there was a little less gilding about the arrangements, but an oriental potentate did noble violence to his own traditions by inviting ladies to the Banquet which he gave at the Dolmabokeh Palace, and by attending in person the State Ball at the British Embassy. For once a genuine incognito was assumed when the Prince and Princess under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Williams, toured the bazaars and other parts of the town at their ease, but "Mrs. Williams" evidently shed none of her powers of

## CONSTANTINOPLE

attraction as, according to his own subsequent story, she was able to fascinate a dealer reputed to be the hardest bargainer in Stamboul. But, pleasant as were the ten days spent as the Sultan's guests and unforgettable as was the tour of the Crimean battlefields, the *bonne bouche* for the Princess was still to come in the happy visit to the dearly loved brother and his Russian wife, still in her teens, whom so far she had not seen.<sup>1</sup>

The Acropolis meant a little less to the Princess than the infant nephews whom she found at Corfu and who, in manhood, were to be her constant guests; she delighted in country excursions daily indulged in for nearly a fortnight, and the only cloud to her happiness was in the death of a sailor<sup>2</sup> who fell from one of the yards of the *Ariadne* just as the vessel was getting under way to steam for Brindisi.

With Paris the Odyssey began, with Paris it was to end, and at the Hotel Bristol ("cette vieille bofte," as Mr. Ritz later scornfully described it) on the 5th of May a huge pile of correspondence awaited the travellers. There may have been some trepidation in opening the letter, whose black-edged border absorbed the larger part of the small sheet of note-paper, and there was probably some relief to find that it appeared only to contain a domestic homily. The children, who had been under the Queen's care, were very well, and she had grown very fond of them

<sup>1</sup>The young King had recently married the Grand Duchess Olga, niece of the Tsar Alexander II.

<sup>2</sup>The Princess put off from hour to hour the departure of the ship in the hopes that anyhow the body might be recovered; but the young sailor had evidently been stunned and nothing was ever seen of him.

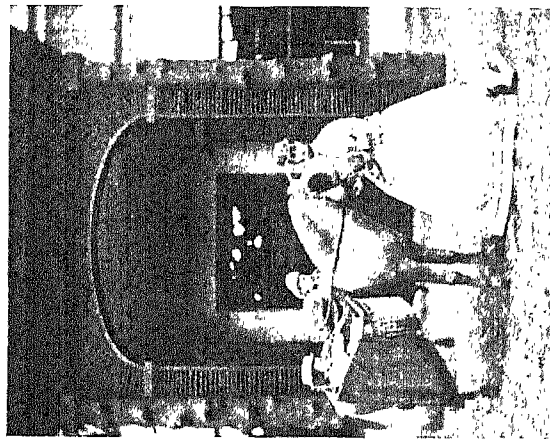
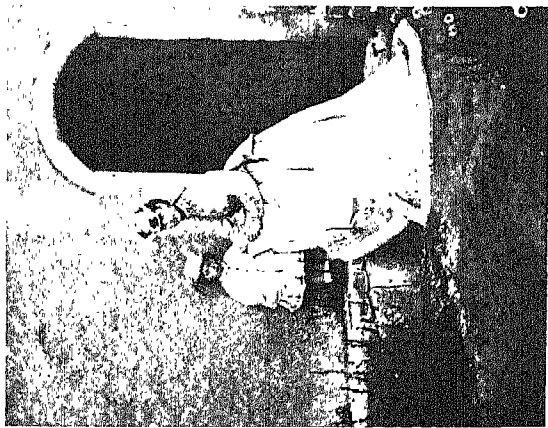


## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

and they of her; the parents, who apparently were supposed to be ignorant on such matters, were advised to let the "two little dears" get out early and go to bed in good time. "They ought not to be downstairs too long at a time and one at a time is much the best." That the elder was "very sensible when you have him with you alone," did not necessarily imply that the younger was otherwise. A kindly tone pervaded the allocution, but there was just a little lemon juice squeezed over the conclusion: "You will, I fear, have incurred enormous expenses, and I don't think you will find any disposition—except perhaps as regards those which were forced on you at Constantinople—to give you any more money."

But from every angle of view the tour had been well worth the money which, as a matter of fact, had been judiciously spent. The mere absence from home was not without value; much ground had been gone over, much had been learnt, and full use had been made of an opportunity—unlikely, anyhow for the Princess, to recur—to get a knowledge of men and matters at first hand. And above all a young husband and wife had been drawn closer together than was ever possible in the fever and hurry of London life. And, under the Eastern skies and on the Nile waters a fresh link was forged between them which future happenings might strain but would never really impair.

The advice as to the bringing up—or in this particular case the bringing down—of the little



THE PRINCESS OF WALES, WITH HER CHILDREN (1850)



## THE CHILDREN

Princes was accepted in the same good spirit in which it was offered and was not followed simply because it ran contrary to the Princess of Wales's own inclination. If she could have had her own way, she would never have had her children "out of the way." For her, there was no "children's hour"—all hours were theirs; the little hands never tumbled her skirts or ruffled her hair, childish chatter never wearied nor disturbed her. In her presence the children would always "behave," not from any compulsion to do so but because there was so little temptation to do otherwise.

"How wise Alix is to be seen driving every day with her children," said one of her relations with perhaps a little envy in her tone. No one appreciated the picturesque better than "Alix," and she would always allow herself to be perfectly stage-managed; it was not wisdom, however, but a real *cri de cœur* which caused her to dispense with a lady-in-waiting, and group her little girls close to her in her afternoon drives. Nor, in truth, was the Prince of Wales any less addicted to the society of his children, and even when conducting his voluminous correspondence, a youthful interrupter, however vociferous, would only meet with the mildest rebukes.

But, perhaps because there was a tendency on the part of the younger brother to dominate the elder whose delicate constitution was of a piece with a rather pensive outlook, the Princess wisely agreed, and agreed betimes, that feminine surveillance must give way to masculine tuition when the boys were but six and seven years old. There is evidence, how-

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

ever, written and oral, that, as the years passed on, both parents reckoned that the lighter the rein, the easier to guide and control youthful lives, that there are moments when it is wise to refrain from interference and even to be chary of advice and that, however careful the protection from evil, there are stages through which young people must be left to find their way alone. *Post hoc* is of course not to be confused with *propter hoc*, but if proof of the training for their children which Albert Edward and Alexandra adopted were required, it would be easy to designate a king who, through all the changes and chances of a crowded and exalted life, has never "sham'd his mother's kiss or cross'd her lightest vow."

If it is perfectly true that the Princess was never "aloof" it is equally true that in marked degree, though quite unconsciously, *elle se faisait valoir*. Her perfect simplicity played no small part in her perfect correctitude. Her presence at any gathering involved no "stiffness," but she carried to it a peculiar dignity, not quite easy to define, but wholly impossible to deny. From the day of her coming to the day of her crowning, she was not only Princess of Wales, she was *the* Princess, and the world did her willing homage accordingly.

But to children and old people she would "give in" at once. For little folk of whatever class she had a special attraction, and they, for their part, attracted her quite irresistibly. Driving her pony cart in the Norfolk lanes she would tell schoolchildren to "catch hold;" the parties when she presided at Buckingham

## YOUNG AND OLD

Palace which pleased her most were the juvenile gatherings given in honour of Princess Victoria's birthday; she would not merely "arrange" a concert in a Children's Hospital but play to them herself. Children had no secrets from her and any shyness vanished at the first sight of her smiling eyes.

And as with the very young, so with the very old. The little Admiral<sup>1</sup> could say he did not like the way she was doing her hair. Lady A.<sup>2</sup> could call her "My dear" with impunity; at the later Garden Parties at Holland House she would tuck Lady Holland's<sup>3</sup> arm in her own and thus make the tour with her; Alfred Montgomery<sup>4</sup> could be sure of a visit to his sickroom; at a ball, Lord Strathnairn,<sup>5</sup> with bent head and failing memory, would be selected as a partner for the first quadrille. "I have seen the prettiest woman in London this morning and she sent you her dearest love," said the Prince of Wales to Sir Anthony de Rothschild lying on what proved to be his deathbed, and the old man smilingly guessed from whom the message came. There seemed some special affinity alike with the little ones and with those who were nearing their Journey's End.

So far no puff of cloud had overhung a love match, no whisper had traversed the ideal relations between husband and wife. But early in 1870 there occurred

<sup>1</sup>Admiral the Hon. Sir. H. Keppel [1809-1904].

<sup>2</sup>Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury [1815-1893].

<sup>3</sup>Mary, Lady Holland [1810-1889].

<sup>4</sup>Mr. Alfred Montgomery [1814-1893].

<sup>5</sup>Sir Hugh Rose.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

the *cause célèbre* known as the Mordaunt case, and a section of the public pronounced itself for a while as offended by the name of the Prince being associated with it. Lady Mordaunt, who was then barely twenty-three years old, was one of the eight beautiful daughters of Sir Thomas Moncreiffe, and on the so-called confession of an unhappy lady, already pronounced to be insane, the Prince, although not cited as one of the co-respondents, was subpoenaed to appear in the witness box and reply to a charge of undue familiarity. When evidence was taken, the "familiarity" resolved itself into a round dozen of perfectly innocent letters extending over a period of more than a year, and the episode ended with congratulations from Mr. Gladstone and the Lord Chancellor on the Prince's firm and frank demeanour in the court and the shining truth of his denial to an odious charge.

The Prince had consulted the Princess as to whether or no he should waive his privilege and take his stand in the witness box, and she had quietly advised him to do so. But she was still very young and it was her first experience of anything essentially unsavoury, from which she must have hoped—if she ever thought about it at all—that her life would be immune. She was hurt and she frankly admitted it, for the quick sympathy which was one of the chief ingredients of her character, was mated to a perhaps unsuspected sensitiveness, and wounds were not unfelt because they were suffered in silence.

## CHAPTER IX

ON the 15th of July, 1870, there was a dinner-party at Marlborough House, and in the course of it there was slipped into the hands of Mr. Delane, the editor of *The Times*, a note to say that France had declared war on Prussia. The Prince was obviously, and greatly, distressed, and in no wise comforted by the protest of another guest, Sir Robert Morier,<sup>1</sup> that war could have been prevented "if for twenty-four hours the British public had been furnished with a backbone." "What the —— is the use of a backbone without an army, which we have not got?" was the Duke of Cambridge's blunt retort, and events clearly went to show that the Duke was right and the diplomat wrong. Six months earlier, on his way back from a shooting party, Prince Bismarck had laconically remarked to the Crown Prince that it was time "to take up the idea of Empire." The "idea" had been rooted in the Chancellor's mind for many years past, and it now only needed a compound of trickery and cruelty to achieve it. A faked conversation at Ems was the prelude to war for which Germany was wholly prepared; terms signed at Ferrières and coldly calculated to cripple France—living in a fool's paradise so far as her forces were concerned—brought it to an end. Before the guns began to fire Mr.

<sup>1</sup>Then Chargé d' Affaires at Darmstadt.



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Gladstone made a fine, but futile, offer to mediate and then made it clear that any violation of Belgium would provoke England to arm against the invader.

The Princess of Wales was not at the much-disturbed dinner-party; she had enjoyed her stay at Kimbolton in the spring, where the Duchess of Manchester, "with her pearls scarcely whiter than her throat,"<sup>1</sup> had been happy as usual in the selection of her guests, and at Reading, clad in white muslin and pink silk, the Princess had received a rapturous reception and an address which, instead of being a monumental document, had taken shape in a fan mounted in mother-of-pearl and gold, with a dozen words inscribed on it. But she was still not very strong, the *cause célèbre* had annoyed her, and she had prescribed for herself a long stay in Denmark; a week before the war-cloud burst, the Prince had accompanied her to Calais and bid her Godspeed to Copenhagen.

But with the declaration of hostilities the Queen, who was still deprecating "Alix's Danish partisanship," thought that to avoid any shadow of political complications the Princess must come back to England. Backed by the Prime Minister, the Queen thought this the more necessary because the Crown Princess of Prussia had given credit to a trumped-up story that at the French Embassy the Prince of Wales had confided to the French and Austrian Ambassadors his secret hope that Prussia might find more than her match. Anyhow it was common knowledge that France was coveting the hand of Denmark for her

<sup>1</sup>Journal of Lord Suffield.

## THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

very risky enterprise, and the Prince on his return from Copenhagen could only report to Mr. Gladstone that the country was in a very critical state, the King and Government bent on neutrality, the people out for a French alliance.<sup>1</sup>

At Abergeldy that August the stags must have enjoyed a good deal of immunity from the Prince of Wales's rifle, for his thoughts were fixed on the battlefields of France. "I cannot help feeling restless," he wrote, "when so many that one knows and likes are exposed to such danger." He desperately wanted to be of "some use;" could he not go to the King of Prussia with letters of friendly, and restraining, advice? The Queen thought the idea praiseworthy but impractical; the Prince Consort himself, she said, could have done nothing at this juncture, and where he would fail, who could possibly succeed?

The German victory at Worth on the 6th of August, won by the army of the Crown Prince, only drew from his brother-in-law the reflection: "How great must be the blow to the Emperor, how bitter the feelings of France;" the "blow" was only the first of a series of French disasters which culminated in the crushing defeat at Sedan on the 1st of September when MacMahon, with 100,000 men, surrendered, and Napoleon was carried prisoner to Cassel. Ten days later the Empress escaped in disguise from Paris, with a lady-in-waiting and a gallant American

<sup>1</sup>The Crown Princess was just then a little nervous as to the course the war would take, and the Prince of Wales with fraternal frankness reminded her of what "the feelings of little Denmark must have been when the armies of Prussia and Austria were marching on her."

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

dentist as her escort, and arrived on the English coast after encountering a storm at sea which nearly wrecked Sir John Burgoyne's friendly yacht.

The Prince of Wales sprang to the suggestion of the Princess that here they "might be useful;" "though the Queen might find some difficulty in offering a house," the Prince wrote to Lord Granville, "there could be no harm in *our* doing so." They gave the Empress just sufficient time to collect her thoughts and then despatched their invitation by the hand of an equerry. "*La Princesse et moi*," so ran part of a long and warm-hearted letter, "*ayant pensé qu'une résidence près de Londres Vous serait agréable, j'ose offrir à V.M. notre Maison de Campagne à Chiswick qui serait entièrement à la disposition de V.M. et nous serons bien heureux si Vous l'accepteriez.*"

For their pains, the Prince and Princess received a round scolding. The Queen regarded the kindly act as a presumptuous indiscretion, the Foreign Minister admired the style of the letter but thought it imprudent, the Lord Chancellor feared that in view of England having to recognise a Republican Government in France, the offer might be misunderstood. The root of the objection was to be found in a silly story afloat that the Emperor was in close consultation with General Bourbaki, who had escaped from Metz—an escape at which Bismarck was supposed to have winked—and was plotting with him to restore the Empire. Eugénie promptly denied the report, spoke of it as one of Bismarck's tricks, but tactfully declined the offer of Chiswick on the plea that she had

## EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

taken Camden Place at Chislehurst<sup>1</sup> where the Prince and Princess, on their return South, hurried to pay her a visit.

With the victories of the German Army the letters of the Crown Princess became more and more elated, and provocative, in tone. Even her mother must be reminded that "the feeling of belonging to one *great* nation for the first time obliterates all feelings of North and South and is very delicious to experience. What will Bertie and Alix say to all these marvellous events? Gay and charming Paris! *What* mischief that very Court and still more that very attractive Paris has done to English Society! *What harm* to the young and brilliant aristocracy of London!" Such was the text of her allocution when France was writhing under defeat and Eugénie, who had been her hostess, was in grave personal danger. What Bertie and Alix thought may be better imagined than set down in cold print; why must the Crown Princess, who was so English when in Germany, be so blatantly German elsewhere? And as Marlborough House was the Mecca of "the young and brilliant aristocracy of London" (of whom, by the way, she knew very little) their suggested deterioration was not in sisterly vein.

The Queen shared her daughter's surmise that the misfortunes of France were to be regarded as a righteous judgment on her failings; in her nostrils

<sup>1</sup>Their report of the fallen Empress's forlorn condition provoked the Queen's quick sympathy; she hastened to go herself to Chislehurst, begged the Empress to be her guest for a few days, at Windsor, and never afterwards relaxed in sisterly attention, treating her with all the deference paid to a reigning Sovereign.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

the boulevards always savoured of Beelzebub, and she nodded cordial approval to Dr. Macleod's October sermon at Balmoral when he thundered of France "reaping the reward of her wickedness and vanity and sensuality." In a word, the Sovereign clearly "saw the finger of God" in the humiliation of her neighbours across the Channel; the Princess of Wales could only detect the fist of Prussia. She had tasted—and she said so—at something like first hand of the humiliation to which an invaded and violated country is subject, and she felt in her soul for "those poor French." As the Queen had been forward to send hospital stores to Princess Louis of Hesse at Darmstadt, she could not understand why the Prince of Wales should be forbidden to associate himself with a fund for sending corn to French farmers for the use of the peasantry. Lord Granville's warning that Prussian susceptibilities with regard to the Prince of Wales's French proclivities were more acute than ever, weighed very lightly with her; she only wanted to help those who seemed to need help so sorely. The Princess may not have been closely versed in the complexities of international affairs, but somehow she could never understand how the Queen could just then write "a powerful Germany can never be dangerous to England but the very reverse;" the Proclamation at Versailles of the King of Prussia as German Emperor, ten days before the capitulation of Paris, filled her with forebodings which proved not to be unjustifiable.

Such, however, is circumstance that there came a moment when Queen Victoria, whose womanly heart

## BISMARCK

finally stirred her to plead for easy conditions for the vanquished French, was being accused by Bismarck of introducing "petticoat influence into politics" while the extreme pro-French party in England were reproaching the Prince of Wales for sending a colourless message through the Queen's Messenger<sup>1</sup> to the Crown Prince at Versailles.

After the peace at Frankfurt the Queen sought to restore good relations between her two elder children. She was not helped in this respect by a remark attributed to her daughter—which irritated the Princess of Wales more than the Prince—that a comparison between the brothers-in-law would show Fritz to be leading by far the more useful life. But in July the Crown Prince and Princess arrived at the German Embassy, where the curmudgeonly Count Bernstorff was soon to be succeeded by the courtly Count Munster; the Prince and Princess of Wales called there frequently, and as soon as the ice was broken, an unfailing subject for conversation and for mutual agreement was found in the "horrrifying" methods and manners of Bismarck, the Chancellor meanwhile fondly flattering himself that the visits of the Prince and "his Danish Consort" on Carlton House Terrace, argued that Queen Victoria's son was faltering in his love for France.

That August the Prince of Wales, travelling as Lord Renfrew and with the Prince de Ligne as his cicerone, visited the battlefields round Metz and

<sup>1</sup>Capt. Hozier, an officer in the 2nd Life Guards.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Sedan; in the weaver's cottage at Donchery he sat in the chair occupied by Napoleon for the historic conversation with Bismarck, he mourned, as he passed through, the German occupation of Alsace, and in rather sad spirit joined the Princess at Kissingen where the salt baths were supposed to benefit her. Then came a delightful jaunt. Lord and Lady Renfrew, with only a maid—the word “dresser” was dropped for the nonce—and a valet, engaged rooms at Oberammergau but, to preserve their incognito, did not book seats at the theatre. Never was there a happier Sunday; “such a nice breakfast” at seven-thirty, there was no tedium involved in sitting for three hours at a stretch, morning and afternoon, wholly absorbed in the performances; the evening meal was very simple but “so good,” and while Lord Renfrew smoked his cigar, Lady Renfrew put on her little green Tyrolese hat, tripped off to the bazaar held in the hotel and bought liberally of the wooden figures which the peasants carved and by no means under-estimated. She was quite sure none of the tourists recognised her, and the one acquaintance whom she found was begged not to take off his hat.

The Princess, however, burned with desire to speak to Joseph Meyer, whose “Christus” had touched her to the quick, and she was determined to give him a ring, a very valuable one, which should remind him of the deep impression he had made on her. In strict secrecy Lord and Lady Renfrew revealed themselves to a sublime, but very simple, artist, and learnt from him much that the per-

### *ILLNESS OF THE PRINCE*

formance meant and was meant to teach; the Prince afterwards told a friend that he had "never been so struck with anyone" in his life; the Passion Play admittedly afforded to the Princess food for serious thought for many a long year to come.

The spring of this year was to bring with it a sharp spasm of sorrow, the winter a grave anxiety. The Princess was with the Queen for the opening of the Albert Hall on the 23rd of March, and a week later there was born a little boy who lived just long enough to be precious to her and to be christened, at her insistence, Alexander. Everyone else had small hope of life from the hour of the baby's birth; the mother hoped on till the last breath fluttered from the little lips. To the tiny grave under the church wall at Sandringham she would, in the years to come, make her constant way, and twenty years later she asked, but asked in vain, that her adored first-born should lie beside his day-old brother.

On the 23rd of November the report was made public that the Prince of Wales was suffering from typhoid fever contracted at Scarborough where, with the Princess, he had stayed at Londesborough Lodge on their way South. Five days later his condition was pronounced to be critical and the Queen journeyed to Sandringham, thus paying her first visit to her eldest son's home. There was a slight improvement the next day and affairs of State drew the Sovereign to Windsor, but on the 8th of December a relapse occurred, and she hurried back to Norfolk to remain there for a fortnight, and to return



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

again after Christmas when for a few days, and for the third time, her son's life was in grave danger.

"Maysweet darling Alix be preserved and blessed," is an entry in the Queen's diary when the raging fever had finally abated and the Prince, however weak and exhausted, could be pronounced convalescent. It was a mother's whole-hearted tribute of gratitude to a wife's seven weeks' tireless nursing, to days and nights of almost sleepless watching. "Duty so soon tires," says the Stranger in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," "Love goes all the way." It was certainly not duty which, day in day out, chained a seemingly delicate woman to a sick bed and showed that a slender frame, with its nerves of steel, had powers of endurance which few would have guessed at. The story was true—but repeated *ad nauseam*—of her telling the clergyman that she could not stay for the whole of the Sunday morning service, and would he somewhere insert a few special prayers in which she could join. The request was not the result of any temporary emotion; the religious "views" of the Princess were very simple but they were quite clear and entirely orthodox. It was said of one of the Princesses of an older generation that her evangelical lady-in-waiting would knock at her bedroom door on Sunday morning and say: "You might come to church, Ma'am, though you don't believe in God." The Princess of Wales was not only a profound *croyante* but a devout *pratiquant*; fast and feast were quietly observed by her, the emblems of her belief were dear to her and the moral courage—physical courage was ingrained in

## THANKSGIVING SERVICE

her no less than in the House of Hanover—which she showed over and over again in the teeth of difficulty, was founded upon the rock of sheer faith.

Never perhaps did that courage rise higher than in those long-drawn-out weeks when from time to time the doctors<sup>1</sup> would only hold out to the watchers the barest shreds of hope; her own flame of hope burnt steady, seemingly because it was fed by an utter trust, not in the rather vague, if omnipotent, Deity to whom some of her more German relations would make appeal, but in a personal Saviour who was *Deus* no less than *Bonus*.<sup>2</sup> She could say simply and without any reserve:

Firmly I believe and truly  
God in Three, and God in One  
And I next acknowledge duly  
Manhood taken in His Son.

Long before the Prince left his sickroom Mr. Gladstone was suggesting to the Queen that a Thanksgiving Service should take place in St. Paul's Cathedral. The Sovereign shrank from the idea of "a show;" she thought it incongruous to make a religious ceremony the "vehicle" for expressing popular feeling, but for once she was content to be overruled by her daughter-in-law.<sup>3</sup> "I quite understand

<sup>1</sup>Sir William Jenner, the Queen's physician, was reinforced by Sir William Gull who was now to establish his fame.

<sup>2</sup>To a dear friend whose husband was in daily peril in the Great War she suggested this prayer: "Oh, Lord Jesus, I pray Thee bless us and keep us from all evil and bring us to dwell with Thee. Amen."

<sup>3</sup>Mr. Gladstone had told the Prince of Wales of Canon Liddon's sermon at St. Paul's in which occurred the passage: "If such an event had happened in some preceding ages, the Queen and her nobles would have united with the citizens of London in this

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

your feelings," the Princess tactfully wrote to the Queen, without mentioning a preacher, who was no favourite at Windsor, "about the public thanksgiving, for it seems to me also to be making too much of an outward show of the most sacred and solemn feelings of one's own heart, and I quite agree that a simpler and more private service would be more in accordance with one's own wishes. But then, on the other hand, the whole Nation have taken such a public share in our anxiety, it has been so entirely one with us in our grief, that it may well feel it has a claim to join with us now in a public and universal thanksgiving." The Princess had also good reason to think that in the genuine national "anxiety" there had been swept away the exaggerated, and often apocryphal, stories of "fast-living" and "gambling with high stakes," and that the people wanted to show they had a warm place in their hearts for a Prince who in countless ways had endeared himself to them. Anyhow, whether from personal or patriotic motives, she proved to be right for, on the 27th of February,<sup>1</sup> the Prime Minister could, without exaggeration, congratulate Queen Victoria on the "extraordinary manifestation of loyalty and affection"

great church of the Metropolis for the mercies God has vouchsafed to the Princess."

<sup>1</sup>"Of my darling Alix," the Prince of Wales wrote a few days later to Princess Mary, "I can give you the best possible accounts. What her devotion, tenderness and attention were to me during my long illness can never be known. She was like an angel of light hovering over me and dispelling the dark angel of death. Nor can I ever be sufficiently grateful for the universal sympathy that was evinced towards me by all classes of our country, but I hope, in some small way, to be able to repay it by a life of usefulness to my country."

## IN ROME

and allude to the celebration "as perhaps more solemn and more satisfactory than anything the City of London has yet witnessed."

The Queen herself thought the service too long and found the Cathedral cold, dull, dreary and dingy—a very apt description before the advent of Dean Church<sup>1</sup>—but she was moved to actual tears by the exuberant manifestation of loyalty which greeted her on the route to and from the Cathedral and which she handsomely shared with "Alix (in blue velvet and sable) who sat next to me, and Bertie who sat opposite with little Eddy."

The Prince of Wales completed his convalescence by spending the spring in France and Italy; the desired end was achieved and, although health was a talent with which he was disposed to over-trade, for thirty-two years—except after a fall on the marble staircase at Waddesdon<sup>2</sup>—he had little need for medical advice.

The Prince "knew his Rome" and the sight-seeing on which he insisted—a pretty strenuous course—was all the more enjoyable because the King and Queen of Denmark with their younger children were generally of the party; a subject for daily and eager discussion was the much desired engagement of Princess Thyra to the Duke of Cumberland which was already on the tapis, though a long period elapsed before it materialised.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Church had only just been appointed to the Deanery; within two years there had been a complete change in the aspect, and conduct, of the Cathedral.

<sup>2</sup>Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's palatial residence in Bucks.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

In later years circumstances, not uncoloured by temperament, conspired to bring the Princess of Wales into constant companionship with her elder sister and to keep her somewhat apart from the younger. There were to be many meetings at Copenhagen and Gmunden and reminiscences of childhood would be recalled and dwelt on with delight; together the sisters would inveigh against the meanness of Prussia in withholding from the Duke of Cumberland his family property, and would remind one another that the Prince of Wales was the outspoken champion of his brother-in-law's rights. But the Duchess of Cumberland scarcely set foot in England, and sisterly affection, though it never languished, was not stimulated by the marriage of Prince George to the daughter of the Kaiser in 1913 or by the degradation of the Duke of Cumberland—as a belligerent enemy—from the Order of the Garter two years later.

## CHAPTER X

"YOU are so constantly running about," was one of the reproaches which the Queen frequently, and fretfully, levelled against her son; the charge was not altogether unfounded, and the Princess of Wales herself was disposed to think that rather too much vent was given to exuberant energy; she could not understand why the Prince must "rush off" when the Sandringham party broke up, why an evening without any engagements or devoid of guests should have so unpleasing an aspect. The Prince was genuinely fond of his home; why, it was sometimes rather wistfully asked, could he not sometimes stay quietly in it? But be it remembered that, backed by successive Prime Ministers, the Prince of Wales pleaded again and again to be given some useful, if quite secondary, part to play in the affairs of State. The Queen was obdurate; she was Sovereign *de facto* as well as *de jure* and would yield no fraction of a Sovereign's duties to anyone, perhaps least of all to her eldest son. Baulked of any attempt to serve his country, except in philanthropic enterprises, the Prince was always on the look out for some vent for his energies, and in 1873 he found something to do in Vienna. It was to be his first—but far from his last—experience as President of a Royal Commission, and the *raison d'être* of this one was the British

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

section of an International Exhibition. A fair amount of hard work preceded the trip to Vienna (which was to be extended to Budapest), and to the opening ceremony the English Royalties had been bidden by the Emperor; invitations had gone to other Courts in Europe and the *macédoine princière*, if not quite so representative as at the Tuileries four years earlier, included the representatives of the three Powers then forging the Triple Alliance.

The Prince and Princess of Wales arrived at Vienna on the 28th of April to be lodged in the Finanz Ministerium, once the abode of Prince Eugene; they brought with them the Prince of Wales's younger brother, who was greatly favoured by them both. The Princess voted Prince Arthur very good-looking; he was always "so nice" to her and *such* a good soldier; perhaps she liked him best of all when he allowed his son<sup>1</sup> to choose a commission in the 7th Hussars rather than the reversion to a German Duchy.

There was one little fly in the ointment of good fellowship; Francis Joseph had decreed that the Crown Prince of Germany should at all functions have precedence over the Prince of Wales; the latter resented the decision, not on the grounds of a personal affront but because he agreed with the Princess that it was a step towards bringing Austria into subservience to Germany; nor were they soothed by the reminder that a precedent was to be found in the Congress of Vienna when Heads of

<sup>1</sup>Prince Arthur of Connaught.

## VIENNA EXHIBITION

Missions were arranged in the alphabetical order of their countries. The little difficulty did nothing to sour the personal relations between the brothers-in-law; "Willy" was even described in letters home as "such a nice boy," the Princess being explicit that the Crown Prince Rudolph was "a very nice boy." Yet the one was to bring himself to utter grief and plunge his parents in shame and sorrow; the other was to engineer the misery of the civilised world.

The Viennese could without fear of contradiction say that in their capital that spring were to be seen the three most beautiful women in Europe; their own Empress, the Princess of Wales, and Lady Dudley. The Empress loved her own loveliness and liked it to be recognised, the other two were seemingly unconscious of the open-mouthed admiration which they evoked wherever they went, and took no heed of the discussions over the perfect poise of Lady Dudley's head and the expression of her dark eyes as compared with the pure oval of the Princess of Wales's face and her dazzling complexion. One point was unanimously conceded; the Empress looked "every inch an Empress" but there was something of aloofness in her mien; Lady Dudley's incomparable "looks" were thought to be a little cold, the radiance of the Princess of Wales seemed to warm every heart.

All three were dressed, by day and by night, in the perfection which at that time only the Rue de la Paix could achieve, but the Empress expressed her belief that she and the Princess of Wales were the only two Royal ladies in Europe who made dress a



### *QUEEN ALEXANDRA*

fine art, and that part of their popularity was due to their knowledge of what is really suitable to wear on all occasions.

Fifteen years later the wife of a diplomatist was writing from Vienna: "The Princess has been at Gmunden with her three daughters. She looked so young and they dressed so much alike that at a little afternoon dance at the Queen of Hanover's, the unsophisticated Austrian officers, who had been invited from a neighbouring town, were always asking the mother to dance, imagining she was one of the daughters."

## CHAPTER XI

IF Lord Beaconsfield's testimony be true, the Princess of Wales could claim for herself the carrying off of at least one diplomatic, if rather ephemeral, coup. The national aspirations of Greece, stirred by the troubles in the Near East which came to a head in 1875, met with little sympathy from Mr. Disraeli, who was constitutionally bored by the Balkans; he turned a perfectly polite but stone deaf ear to all the Prince of Wales pleaded and protested on behalf of his brother-in-law. But neither the Prince nor the Princess were to be easily put down; the personal services which the Princess believed to be due from herself to her kinsfolk were seldom out of her mind; "Willy" was her favourite brother and she was determined to help him if she could do so with perfect correctitude.

"I grieve to think," she would say with a sad shake of the head, "of what a hard task my brother has before him and of all he has gone through the last twelve years."

On his way to India the Prince of Wales spent a couple of days at Athens, and it was then arranged that the King and Queen of the Hellenes should be guests at Marlborough House the following summer. The visit, which took place in July, 1876, "went off" admirably; the King, freed for a while from the dis-

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

tracting cares which sat with him on his unsteady throne, enjoyed every moment of it; the Prime Minister, flushed with his successful deal in Suez Canal shares, and a little flattered by the attentions lavished on him from Marlborough House, listened with apparent sympathy to all King George poured forth about the difficulty of restraining his excitable subjects from invading Turkish dominions; the Queen bestowed the Garter with kindest gesture and consoling words, and the Princess could promise to look after her brother's interests through the winter and come to Athens herself in the spring. She needed no reminder to keep her promise<sup>1</sup> for she enjoyed every moment spent with her brother—who at times was not indisposed to trespass on her affection for him—but she took every opportunity of impressing on her brother the Prime Minister's advice to "refrain from joining Russia and the Balkan peoples in the hue and cry against Turkey." Honest efforts were made to follow the injunction and the King of Greece, when in 1878 the Berlin Congress was in session, could beg Lord Beaconsfield to secure recognition of Greek claims to Epirus and Thessaly.

The Prince of Wales, aware of the large issues at stake, played the part of intermediary with perfect discretion and merely reminded the British Pleni-

<sup>1</sup>Athens was always a sort of holiday home even more than Copenhagen; life was very easy and spent largely out of doors; etiquette was sketchy, or if enforced was apt to be suggestive of Opera Comique, and a visitor to the Palace remembers seeing King George propelling what was not a football along a garden path, the Princess of Wales protesting that her new hat was being spoiled, and her brother replying that it was an ugly hat and deserved kicking.

## LORD BEACONSFIELD

potentiary how anxious the Princess was that something, however little, should be done for Greece.

"I did something yesterday for Greece," Lord Beaconsfield replied on the 6th of July, when informing the Prince, in confidence, that Cyprus was to be in British occupation; "it was very difficult but by no means to be despised. It was all done for her Royal Highness's sake. I thought of Marlborough House all the time, and after many efforts it was not decided until the last moment." The "something" proved to be a rather wobbly rectification of the frontiers of Greece at Turkey's expense, and even so the King of the Hellenes, at no distant date, had to renew his suit and beg the Prince of Wales to help in securing the fulfilment of the promises embodied in the Treaty of Berlin. Russia meanwhile muttered and moaned over being robbed of the fruits of her military victory while Austria, equally discontented, bided her time but eventually, with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, drove a coach and six through the most salient provisions of the Treaty.

The accession of the Liberal Government to power in 1880 gave a fresh opportunity to the Princess to further a cause near her heart; she had not forgotten how "kind" Mr. Gladstone had been about the Ionian Islands; she knew what he had said about the Turks and their "bag and baggage;" she had no feeling of animosity against the new Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Charles Dilke, although she had heard him spoken of at Windsor as a "dreadful Radical," and "Willy" and his wife were

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

to be at Marlborough House for three weeks in the summer.

The Prince of Wales once more came to her aid. He arranged interviews between his brother-in-law and Dilke, and the "dreadful Radical" was much impressed with the clarity and force of the King's opinions; even better, Lord Granville was now Foreign Secretary and both he and his still youthful wife were among the Princess's intimate and cherished friends. Lord Granville showed tact as well as sympathy and bade the Princess have patience; he knew that the only point on which Russia and Turkey saw eye to eye was in their desire to check any Greek expansion. The auspicious moment came when in March 1881 the Prince and Princess of Wales were in St. Petersburg to attend the funeral of the murdered Tsar. "Y.R.H.," he wrote to the Prince, "feels so kindly about Greece that I hope you will remind the Emperor how much it will affect the position of the King of Greece if the frontier line can be settled in a manner not entirely to disappoint the reasonable expectations of his subjects. Apart from any question of *amour propre* to divide Thessaly between the Turks and the Greeks appears to be a certain way of creating future difficulties."

In his sister, the new Empress, the King of the Hellenes had another powerful advocate on the spot, and the issue was not long in doubt; that summer, under a Convention signed with Turkey, Thessaly was ceded to Greece. The satisfaction of the sisters was great but was not to be enduring. Having obtained what these had been so largely instrumental

## PRINCESS ALICE

in securing for him, the King was spurred by his Ministers to make further claims. The Greek people specially resented the incorporation of Eastern Roumelia within the boundaries of the new Bulgaria, in 1886 they clamoured for a march into Turkey to secure some corresponding cessions of territory and flatly refused to disarm at the bidding of the Powers. An effective blockade was the consequence; the Princess of Wales plied her brother with entreaties to submit to the inevitable; her anxiety was acute—and to the close observer distressing to witness—until, on the 1st of June, a plucky, if ill-advised, little State yielded to pressure.

The Prince of Wales's Russian tendencies—if they ever really existed—had been sharply checked in 1876 by the conviction that Russian influence was potent to prevent Serbia from coming to terms with her *suzerain*. In the summer his dearly loved sister, Princess Alice,<sup>1</sup> had assured him from personal knowledge that the Tsar was bent on peace, but even then she could not reassure him as to the Tsar's agents in the disturbed districts. "Russia," he wrote to the Queen in October from Dunrobin, "pours officers, men and money into Serbia and will not let them treat for peace. I wrote to Affie yesterday and gave him my views pretty strongly on the subject." Just at that moment the Prince was being asked himself to intervene. On his invitation Colonel

<sup>1</sup>A little more than two years later the Princess of Wales was writing "My poor Bertie still looks very sad and unhappy, but no wonder; he was so fond of poor darling Alice."

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Lloyd Lindsay<sup>1</sup> reported to him from the Servian seat of war how sad was the plight of the people and how certainly the Servian outbreak could be traced to St. Petersburg. He begged the Prince to write direct to the Tsar, to plead with him "to bring about a cessation of this disastrous strife" and to remind him of the iniquity "of driving people into rebellion against their will." The Prince was more than willing to try his hand at peace-making, and the Princess was to have written in the same strain to the Tsarevna; but their hands were held now not because they were discouraged by the Queen from what she considered a brave and useful step, but because the Prime Minister so strongly discountenanced it. It was altogether an uncomfortable autumn; the King of the Belgians had been very troublesome about his proposed colonisation of the Congo, and it was gravely suspected at Marlborough House that his methods would border on the barbarous, and there had been no little anxiety about Prince Albert Victor, who was stricken with typhoid fever, and the King of Denmark had come over unexpectedly to try and cheer his daughter.

And it had been such a happy spring; the Prince of Wales's tour in India had been, literally, a blazing success. Mr. Gladstone had so much wanted the Prince to serve on the Indian Council and it was so disappointing when the Queen declined to sanction

<sup>1</sup>Created Lord Wantage in 1875. Lady Wantage was a wise, as well as close, friend of the Princess and was especially associated with her in the work of the Red Cross. With Lord Wantage's cousin, the Duchess of Rutland—"little Violet" as the Princess always called her—the same friendship existed.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES  
SKETCHED BY VIOLLET, DUCHESS OF RICHMOND  
*By gracious permission of H. M. the King*





## INDIA

the idea. But this had been a much better business and had been productive of real good. The Princess had badly wanted to accompany her husband<sup>1</sup> but she was told that, on account of the necessity for rapid travelling, her presence might prejudice the usefulness of the Mission; she only needed this hint to give up the idea and repair to Copenhagen instead of Calcutta for Christmas. She journeyed as far as Calais with the travellers and tearfully confided her husband to the special care of Sir Bartle Frere and Lord Suffield; and, as the Prince was a copious, if not very legible, letter-writer, she was kept in touch with everything that happened. The Princess shared, but only on paper and to the Prince, her husband's indignation that it was only from a casual glance at the newspaper he learned the British Sovereign was to be further styled Empress of India; she counted the days of his absence and on board the *Enchantress* on the 11th of May she impatiently awaited the arrival of the *Serapis* in the Solent. The enthusiastic welcome at Portsmouth and the triumphal progress to London through decorated stations moved her again to tears, and Mr. Disraeli's neglect to apprise the Prince of the Queen's new title was condoned with the message that "England is justly proud of many things but at the moment prouder of nothing more than its prince;" Mr. Gladstone himself—and she

<sup>1</sup>For a great many years it was with difficulty she could school herself to say good-bye to her husband. "I was dreadfully low at parting with my beloved hubby," she writes from Chiswick in 1869, even when the Prince was only paying a short visit to Scotland and she was unable to travel owing to an impending event.

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liked Mr. Gladstone so much better than Mr. Disraeli—could not have said anything nicer or more appropriate. Then Count Beust, who was now “such a friend,” composed for the State Ball a valse in honour of the Prince’s return and dedicated it to the Princess, who asked him: “Have you seen your name in the *Morning Post*?” “Yes, Madam,” was the answer. “I used to appear between Bismarck and Gortschakoff, now I take rank between Strauss and Waldteufel.”

And Mr. Disraeli gave a great dinner with Dukes and Duchesses galore, when the Princess was presented with an immense bouquet of roses and orchids “bright, sweet and pendulous, and studded with butterflies and humming birds;”<sup>1</sup> and to please the Prime Minister rather than herself the Princess took one of the butterflies and put it in her hair. It was all very gorgeous but very artificial, and the Princess found Mr. Disraeli’s flattery rather too flowery and his *bons mots* rather too buttery. Flattery was never a particularly sweet savour to her nostrils; what she really liked was a tribute paid to her a short while after at Torquay, when fifty fishing smacks formed up and the fishermen dipped their flags opposite the villa where she was staying with the Duchess of Sutherland.

And then in 1877 there came the call to which every British mother must respond, whatever may be the tug at her heartstrings; the Prince of Wales

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield.

## A ROYAL CRUISE

was sure—and the Princess, if with an aching heart, agreed—that, however steady and strict a domestic régime, for the undisturbed education and proper discipline of his sons, they must leave home. Perhaps he remembered his own rather joyless boyhood and was determined that his sons should not have the same dreary experience; the boys were to be entered as naval cadets on the *Britannia* Training Ship at Dartmouth. The Queen, as soon as she heard of it, demurred; with sublime indifference to the parents' views on a matter which concerned them perhaps more than any other, she had drafted a memorandum expounding her own notions as to the training of her grandsons, and in this document the rough and tumble of a training ship had no place. She now suggested Wellington as a compromise (for some unexplained reason Eton and Harrow were then out of the question,) but she allowed herself to be gracefully overruled. The Princess wholly favoured her husband's plans; if she was to part with her boys she would prefer them to enjoy all the healthy air and no less healthy companionship which life on the *Britannia*, and later on the *Bacchante*, would ensure. So, although he would not make the decision without her consent, she raised no objection whatever when the Prince early in 1879 confided to her his project that their sons should girdle the world in a warship, with a first and shorter trip to the West Indies.

The longer cruise of the *Bacchante* was marked by the likelihood of the midshipmen receiving their baptism of fire; the small fleet to which the ship belonged received orders, while on a visit to the

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Falklands, to proceed to South Africa, and the question arose whether the young Princes might not be attached to a Naval Brigade. The Prince and Princess of Wales, to whom fear of danger was a thing entirely unknown, were indisposed to exercise any veto, but the Sovereign was emphatic in refusal; not only, she argued, would her grandsons be exposed to unnecessary but—what was even worse—to undignified risks. The independence of the Boers was not to be proclaimed till after the bitter story of Majuba Hill and the Transvaal patriots were, in Queen Victoria's view, not antagonists but rebels in arms. And in curious disregard of the fact that a devoted mother must have been no less anxious than herself as to the immunity from danger of boys who were all in all to her, she thought well to write:

"DARLING ALIX,

"I am very sorry Bertie should have been sore about the boys; but I think he must have forgotten the *arrangements* and *conditions* and *instructions* respecting their going to sea. I, and even Bertie and you, only consented to their *both* going to sea for their *education* and *moral training*. This being the case—the *Bacchante* going to the Cape, which was done in a hurry without one consultation with me (*I disapproved*)—and feeling how valuable these two *young* lives are to the *whole nation*, I felt *bound* to protect them against useless and unnecessary exposure in a cruel *Civil War*—for so it is, the Boers being my subjects, and it being a rule that Princes of the

## ACTIVE SERVICE

Royal Family *ought not* to be mixed in it. In any other war, should in time there be one (when Georgie be older) and his ship be *obliged necessarily* to take part in it, I would quite agree with Bertie. Pray show this to him, as I am sure he and every one would agree in this being the *right course*."

*Bon chien chasse de race* is more than a half truth, and the Princess of Wales would freely admit that, whatever delinquencies—and they were many—were charged to its history, the House of Hanover could clearly claim, as one of its attributes, that physical courage which engenders the willingness to take and give hard knocks when a good cause is at stake. Every means at his disposal was employed by the Prince of Wales to secure consent to take part in the campaign against Arabi and later in the Nile Expedition to relieve Gordon; the Princess believed him to be perfectly right in his manly appeal and, hard as the parting just then would have been, she regretted the refusal with which he was met. So now she shared the disappointment of two gallant boys—whose every hair on their heads was dear to her—eager to smell powder and snatch an experience which might hereafter be denied to them.

The reluctance to allow the prospective Heir to the Throne to take part in the ups and downs of a campaign, suggests a contrasting mental picture, (which Queen Alexandra was known to have drawn for herself thirty-five years later,) of a very young man, quite unconcerned with his exalted rank,

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making his way towards the trenches—and only really happy when he was in them—on a cranky army bicycle along the *pavé* of a French road which had received its daily ration of German hate.

As events turned out the unhappy Treaty of Majuba was to forestall any naval brush with the Boers and the *Bacchante* made her way to Australia, Japan and China and thence home through the Straits of Malacca and across the Indian Ocean; it was a joyful family party which boarded the corvette off St. Alban's Head on the 5th of August, 1881, and sweeter than anything to the mother was the sight of "Eddy and George" acting as midshipmen at the foot of the gangway ladder, with the well-kept secret that "Eddy had shot up to be taller than his father."

Absence from England had prevented the confirmation of the boys at the earlier age that the Princess would have preferred; the "laying of hands" on her sons at Whittingham Church on the 8th of August was almost the last duty Archbishop Tait undertook, and again and again she would remind them of the old man's injunction as to regular Communions, real prayers and daily reading of the Bible. Religion in the primary sense of the word, the binding oneself up with God, was the religion of her own life which she sought, quite simply and far more by example than precept, to instil into the boys whom she loved so much better than life itself.

## CHAPTER XII

EXCEPT where the country of her birth or Greece were concerned, the Princess seldom intruded into foreign politics, but she knew that the political, or quasi-political, *démarches* of the Prince were the more vehemently resented by the Queen if in any way her own name were introduced. The Sovereign was especially annoyed with her son for calling on Garibaldi at Stafford House because one or two flighty journalists had compared the popular welcome given to a "subverter of thrones" with the enthusiasm displayed when Princess Alexandra had entered London a year earlier; this she thought disrespectful to her daughter-in-law and thus, indirectly, to herself. She was a little uncomfortable as to how far the Princess's hand had been engaged in bringing about a close understanding between the Tsar and the Prince at one of the family gatherings at Fredensborg in 1887; the two had stood on common ground, where the King of the Hellenes had joined them, in lamenting the untrustworthy temper of Prince William and in discussing the danger to European peace which might arise when that temper would be subject to no control; but the Queen prudently discountenanced all partisanship and William had not as yet shown his hand openly as regards his envy and hatred of England. Then the letter



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

to the Prince respecting the visit to Russia of Lord Randolph Churchill,<sup>1</sup> "a man devoid of all principle," was the angrier because the Princess had been induced to give the "impetuous and utterly unreliable" traveller a letter of introduction to her sister.

But there was a distinct period of tension in 1877, when gossip had it that the Princess of Wales was Russophil; the suggestion, if it had any *sous entente* of exercising political influence, was unfounded, but to Russia she was certainly bound by a threefold family tie, the earliest having been formed with the marriage of her sister to the Heir to the Russian Throne. Conditions of health forbade her to attend the pompous ceremony at St. Petersburg in November 1866, but she found herself, as was not unusual, in gentle opposition to the Queen in urging that the Prince should not be absent from it. Here she had for her champion Lord Derby<sup>2</sup>, who thought that the Prince of Wales, with his unfailing tact, might do something to further the friendly relations between the two countries which the newly appointed Chancellor, Count Gortschakoff, seemed anxious to bring about. The Prince reminded the Sovereign that any act of courtesy traced to her would be keenly appre-

<sup>1</sup>Owing to an incident which occurred during the Prince of Wales's absence in India there had been a marked estrangement between him and Lord Randolph; the incident was aggravated by an appeal made to the Princess in connection with it. A reconciliation took place late in 1883 when Lord and Lady Randolph entertained the Prince and Princess of Wales to dinner and, to make the reconciliation happier, invited Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone to be their fellow guests.

<sup>2</sup>14th Earl of Derby.



THE PRINCESS OF WALES WITH PRINCESS DAGMAR

*Facing page 130.*



## RUSSIA

ciated by the Imperial Family; he frankly said how much he would like to promote "the *entente cordiale* between Russia and our own country," and he promised the Foreign Minister, Lord Stanley,<sup>1</sup> he would give no voice to any "strong anti-Turkish opinions." The visit was an unqualified success and the Princess was richly rewarded for her advocacy by glowing reports from her husband and sister; the Queen was pleased that the Prince had remembered to take his kilt with him and had danced in it at the ball given by the British Ambassador, Sir Andrew Buchanan, who was such a keen Scotsman that his Danish proclivities were overlooked; the Foreign Minister was forward, not only with congratulations "for a real service rendered," but with a round contribution towards the expenses of the journey.

All this was very right and proper and the family reunions at Copenhagen fostered quasi-fraternal feelings between the Tsarevich and the Prince of Wales, and at Jugenheim,<sup>2</sup> the ducal château of Hesse-Darmstadt, in 1871, despite muttering of coming political storms, the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh were fellow guests with the Tsar and his wife and family. Controversial subjects were studiously, and successfully, avoided and in the minds of the whole party there sprang up the thought that, with a further strengthening of domestic relations, Anglo-Russian rivalry might be

<sup>1</sup>Foreign Minister.

<sup>2</sup>The Empress Marie of Russia, wife of Alexander II, was a princess of Hesse.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

checked or, anyhow, healthily controlled. Bismarck's forthcoming *Drei Kaiser Bund* was a formidable obstacle to this cheerful notion and loomed large in Queen Victoria's steady and sagacious outlook; the Prince and Princess of Wales clung to their hopes of political amity, if not intimacy, with Russia. Their vision, however illusory, was shared by Mr. Gladstone; but the House of Commons was just a little bewildered when the Prime Minister in the Session of 1873 declared that the engagement officially announced between the Queen's second son and the only daughter of the Emperor of Russia was void of political weight and was to be welcomed as a step towards that better understanding with Russia which was an important item in the Liberal programme. The Princess beamed with pleasure; the Prince, who was just then making a rather painful study of the situation in Central Asia, was beginning to have his doubts; anxious, however, to make easy a marriage which he believed would be for his brother's welfare, he not only fell in with his wife's suggestion that Zanda and Minnie, with their little boys, should spend three weeks at Marlborough House, but he wrung from the Queen permission to give some official colour to their reception; a "Traveling Escort" of the 3rd Dragoon Guards (not Household Cavalry, that would be "too much") was detailed to conduct the Russian Royalties from Woolwich to Pall Mall. To no one did the occasion give more gratification than to the youngest member of the party; until the hour when a foul act of regicide put a term to his unhappy life, the last ruler

## TSAREVITCH AND TSAREVITZA

of the Romanovs cherished the memory of that first sight of Uncle Bertie and Aunt Alix.

During the three weeks the Princess and the Tsarevitza agreed to be dressed entirely alike—a photograph is still extant depicting them in white gowns with little straw bonnets trimmed with red currants; each morning the railings of Hyde Park would be lined with womenfolk to see the Princesses drive by in the newly invented "Victoria" drawn by two grey ponies; Bridgewater House, Apsley House, Grosvenor House and Dorchester House, all threw open their doors, and at Lansdowne House the guests with difficulty restrained themselves from standing on chairs to watch the Royal quadrille in which the Tsarevitza was partnered by Prince Teck and the Princess of Wales by Lord Dupplin. Perhaps the highest peak of popular interest was reached when at the Albert Hall the Shah of Persia, his coat studded with pearls and diamonds and a great rope of pearls round his neck, gazed on the huge assembly from his vantage point between the two sisters, the beauty of the elder, *nem con*, entirely eclipsing that of the younger. And there was more than one aspect of London to which the Tsarevitza's attention was drawn. Quietly, and without notice, the sisters visited the House of Charity in Soho, the Newport Market Refuge, the London Hospital and other places where poverty and suffering walk together. The future Empress of Russia may have sighed to think how difficult it would be for her to follow her sister's example and keep quick touch with the happenings of the underworld.

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The Tsar was quite unmistakably anxious to revive the Prince of Wales's pro-Russian feeling; he amiably insisted on the Prince and Princess coming to St. Petersburg for the wedding fixed for January 11th-23rd, and asked if Prince Arthur might be included in the invitation. The Queen was quite agreeable to this proposition but sternly forbade her eldest son to accept the colonelcy of a crack Russian regiment which was tendered to him. The Prince Consort, she said, had been offered the same distinction by the Emperor of Austria and had refused it; what Albert had declined, Albert Edward must not accept; for "Affie," she explained, the case was different as he was the son-in-law elect. The Prince appealed more than once but appealed in vain although he quoted, not very happily, the Prince Regent as a precedent; he yielded finally with good grace but it seemed hard that his sailor brother should wear a beautiful uniform which was rather arbitrarily denied to him.<sup>1</sup> The Princess was a little dismayed by what to her seemed something like a snub to the Tsar; at St. Petersburg she bent herself to propitiate the Russian ruler and, perhaps all unknowingly, paved the way for the incursion which the Queen made in 1875 when she begged Tsar Alexander to use his influence with the Emperor William to stay Bismarck's threatened violence towards France.

A short halt on the road to the Russian wedding

<sup>1</sup>Later the Queen was to reverse this ruling in favour not only of her son but of herself, and also bestowed colonelcies of British regiments on foreign Monarchs.

## THE EMPRESS MARIE

festivities was made at Berlin, whence Lady Augusta Stanley wrote: "The Wales party looked most beaming and fresh," and where the Princess was a little surprised, but quite undeceived, by Prince Bismarck confiding to her his belief that war is "a wild teacher, and anything which can avert it is clear gain." The wedding was marked by every conceivable display of magnificence, the Bride's cloth of silver train, ermine mantle and diamonds were of staggering cost, but the Princess of Wales in blue velvet was the cynosure of every eye, the Russian ladies no less than the Austrian frankly admitting her peerless beauty.

There was a long heart-to-heart talk with the Empress Marie, already a very sick woman, whose own married life had not been quite smooth; the Princess promised that she would do all in her power to make her new sister-in-law feel "at home" in England, though her heart must have sunk at the prospect of trying to do so; she dwelt on the kindness Queen Victoria had shown her and smilingly spoke of her as a "model mother-in-law." The Empress, for her part, hoped that Queen Victoria would always treat her sailor son's wife with the perfect frankness to which, as a daughter, she had been accustomed; her own advice to the newly married pair had been: "*Si vous vous trouvez des défauts, il faut tâcher de les corriger ou de suppléer à ce qui manque, mais gardez cela pour vous et ne le dites jamais.*" It was wise counsel which the Princess had already imposed, with entire success, on herself.

The Queen, whose motherly instincts were seldom



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

at fault, would not allow the antagonism to Russia ingrained in her to colour her relations with her new daughter-in-law; at Osborne on the wedding night she wore the Star and Ribbon of the Order of St. Catherine "and Beatrice her Victoria and Albert for the first time;" she sent white heather to Antwerp for the bride to wear on her arrival in England, and at Windsor Station she "kissed her warmly several times." But the Duchess of Edinburgh found her situation by no means easy, largely because it was so different to what it had been in her own country; the only daughter of the Tsar of All the Russias must yield the *pas*, not only to the wife of the Heir Apparent, but to all the daughters of the Sovereign, even if married to a British commoner or a minor German Prince. She found the atmosphere chilling, more so even than she expected; she even suspected—so she told one of her few intimate friends—that the Sovereign resented the fact that the jewels, showered upon her in splendid profusion by an adoring father, eclipsed any that England could produce.

Towards the close of her life she told this friend—who was a great many years her junior—that there was one relation whose love and sympathy, single-hearted and wholly genuine, she could never forget; there was burnt into her memory the first gesture of the Princess of Wales when, at the Opera, she withdrew herself for a few moments to the back of the Royal Box so that the "bride" should have for herself the greetings of a crowded house. When the Duchess, who somehow always remained a

## THE DUCHESS OF EDINBURGH

"foreigner" in this country, spoke of her relations and acquaintances as "dear So-and-So" there might be detected a slightly sardonic tone, but when she spoke to her friend of "dear Alix" there was quite evidently a ring of real devotion to one who had helped her through a difficult time and to whom she felt herself bound by gratitude scarcely less than by love. The sisterly kindness was never more needed, and never more felt, than in 1877 when Russia declared war on Turkey. The leading members of the Royal Family were then understood to be no less sharply split in their opinions than was the Cabinet. The Queen, leaning wholly on Lord Beaconsfield—whom she now regarded as the Oracle of Truth and the Ark of Salvation—and the Prince of Wales quite justifiably irritated by the trend of events in Russia, were admittedly Turcophil, while the Princess of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh were said to take their cue from Lord Derby and Lord Salisbury and affirm Russia's rights to save Christian States from the clutches of the infidel. The Queen sent a private message to the Tsar that in the event of a Russian advance on Constantinople British neutrality could not be guaranteed, while the Prince of Wales wrote scornfully about "sitting with hands folded" and "cutting a ridiculous figure in the eyes of the word;" the Princess of Wales, whatever her private opinions, remained silent and directed her energies so as to make things a little easier for the sister-in-law whose "lot" in England just then was certainly "not a happy one."

## CHAPTER XIII

VIENNA had whetted the Prince of Wales's appetite for exhibitions; he had been interested, amused and useful and, on his return from India, he cheerfully consented to preside over the British section of the Paris International Exhibition, appointed to open on May Day, 1878. When the time came there was a little tussle with the Duke of Richmond who, as Lord President of the Council, claimed that the powers which the Prince was asked to assume, vested in him. But the precedent of Vienna was successfully quoted, and the Prince flung himself into the work of organisation; he crossed the Channel repeatedly, decided that, as the ruling Houses of Europe were rather holding back he would be the first European royalty to pay official homage to the Republican Government, and showed such enthusiasm for his job that he almost persuaded the Queen to come over and inspect the great display for herself. Anyhow, he was determined that all the notabilities gathered for the occasion, as well as the Parisians themselves, should see the Princess of Wales with their own eyes and with her wealthy sister-in-law, the Crown Princess of Denmark, she joined the Prince at the Hotel Bristol on the 3rd of May just too late for the opening.

For over a fortnight there were functions and

## PARIS EXHIBITION

fêtes by day and night and perhaps the one most enjoyed was the party at good Miss Ada Leigh's Orphanage, for which the Royal visitor wore her prettiest dress; children as usual quite forgot to be shy with her, and these "poor mites" had to be specially petted.

Lord Lyons was to illustrate the theory that if a bachelor means to do things well, no hostess can surpass him; the ball at the British Embassy was perfect in arrangements but so many people wanted to see the Princess at close quarters that, if requests for invitations had been acceded to, the large garden would have had to be covered over. The Princess danced the opening quadrille with a Prince of the House of Orléans, the Duc d'Alençon; Madame Waddington, the wife of the Foreign Minister, was her *vis-à-vis* with the Prince and promised that if she ever came to Albert Gate—which happened soon after—she would do everything to encourage music in London; this was clever of her, for the Princess was just now disposed to take up music, of which she had always been fond, rather seriously and preferred Hallé and Neruda at serious concerts to Patti and Albani in Italian opera.

The ball which the Rothschilds gave in the Rue St. Florentin was an even more sumptuous entertainment; Baroness Alphonse had left London some years before the Princess married, but the Prince had told her of the glories of Ferrières and of the wonderful pictures in the Paris house, and the Empress was supposed to have said that of all the lovely women who came to the Tuileries, the fair Englishwoman

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

was the loveliest. Then there was a breakfast at Princess Mathilde's which ought to have been interesting enough because one or two *savants* were at the table, and in order to please her good-natured hostess the Princess was very pleasant to her brother Prince Jerome Napoleon; she was a little prejudiced against him because Princess Mary, she knew, had considered "Plonplon's" offer of marriage something of an insult. Mrs. Standish was a chosen and constant companion in comings and goings, and the Princess grew to like her more and more, and through her began to know all that was worth knowing about Paris Society; she could discuss with her friend the beauty of Madame de Pourtalès, the charms of Madame de Gallifet—who was asked to come over for Ascot Races—the lavish hospitality of the Princesse de Sagan, and the feudal splendour of Dampierre.

With the Prince as an omniscient guide the Exhibition was "done" thoroughly and conscientiously, and the Princess kept her feelings under sufficient control to express keen admiration of the section for which Germany was responsible.

And then she was very glad that M. Waddington presented M. Gambetta to the Prince and that the French statesman had said the one thing he coveted was friendship with England, Gambetta's dictum *Le Prussianisme, voilà l'ennemi* found a ready echo in her breast, and the Prince, she said, was right to ask him to come to Sandringham.

The fortnight in Paris, perfumed with lilac blossom, had been so absorbingly interesting that the Princess

M. GAMBETTA

readily fell in with the suggestion that she should spend another fortnight there in October when the distribution of prizes would take place.

Meanwhile, France had been seized with one of those anti-English spasms often to be traced as much to temperament as to circumstance. The news, which oozed out during the Berlin Conference, of an Anglo-Turkish Convention, caused an outcry in certain political quarters that England, as mistress of Cyprus, would threaten French influence in the Mediterranean as well as in Egypt; there were even murmurs on the boulevards that the Prince of Wales had misled France as to English policy. Nothing could be further from the truth; the Prince of Wales had, as a matter of fact, been the first to warn his mother, from first-hand information, of France's inclination to fondle Russia, and had begged that her Ministers would take account of it. The British Ambassador was, however, a little nervous and suggested that the Prince should postpone his proposed mid-July visit to Paris; but it took a good deal more than mere rumblings to deter the Prince of Wales from fulfilling arrangements which he thought judicious and beneficial. He stuck to his date, imposed on himself a mission of mediation, took counsel with M. Waddington, and then asked Gambetta to breakfast and fairly talked that astute Frenchman into an entire acknowledgment that Lord Beaconsfield's policy could not and would not prejudice French interests. Where a heavy-handed politician might have dismally failed, a genial Prince heavily scored, and Lord Salisbury could well

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

write: "I thank Your Royal Highness very earnestly for what you have done in Paris."

So when on the 21st of October Marshal MacMahon distributed the awards and declared the Great Exhibition closed, the eyes of French spectators were fixed sympathetically on the Prince of Wales sitting at the President's right hand, and full-throated notes of admiration were heard as Madame la Maréchale conducted the Princess to her place of honour in the Ladies' Tribune.

The closing festivities included a free performance at the Opera and six other theatres; the Princess would have dearly liked to have gone to one of these but Queen Victoria might have objected to a breach of Sunday observance, and the favourite advice of the cautious courtier, "Perhaps better not," was, rather reluctantly, followed. But there were other theatres to be enjoyed, some more than once; Jeanne Granier (still alive and well as these lines are being written) was drawing all Paris with her wit and daring, and Sarah Bernhardt was supreme at the Comédie Française; the Princess heard that M. Perrin was likely to bring his troupe over to London the next year and decided that the great Sarah should then be presented to her.<sup>1</sup> M. Waddington gave a ball at the Quai d'Orsay and the President did likewise at the Elysée—both very grand but not quite so amusing as the ascent in the captive balloon from

<sup>1</sup>Sarah Bernhardt told the present writer that of all the illustrious personages with whom she came in contact—and they were many—one figure appealed to her perpetually and irresistibly; she spoke of the Prince of Wales as of having at the time "blinded" her to everybody else present.

SARAH BERNHARDT

the Exhibition grounds. The Princess was glad to hear that the balloon had been bought by the manager of the Princess's Theatre, but surprised to learn that Londoners would not be allowed to go up in it; she could not understand how anybody could be frightened by so simple an adventure, but then the Princess of Wales was never frightened. When Sipido's bullet whizzed over her head in the railway carriage at Brussels, she was entirely unmoved; no air raid in the Great War ever induced her to seek any sort of shelter; if she was to be blown up, her bed, she thought, was the best place for the happening.

Eleven years later Paris produced another great International exhibition, but as one of its aims was avowedly to commemorate the anniversary of the French Revolution, the Prince of Wales declined to be officially associated with the proceedings. The Princess, however, strongly reinforced by her daughters, was very anxious not to miss the show; the Prince was easily persuaded so long as their visit was informal, and in June a happy family party spent a good many days at the Hotel Bristol and a good many hours on the Eiffel Tower, the honours of which M. Eiffel rendered them himself.

But perhaps the most enjoyable trip to Paris was yet to come. Towards the close of the century French opinion had been greatly offended by comments in the British Press on the Dreyfus case, and partly on account of this, or partly perhaps from a mistaken sense of chivalry, the campaign against the



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Boer patriots raised in France an anti-British feeling which only the tact and courage of King Edward, four years later, was to allay. The epidemic of slander was prevalent, some even of the Royalist friends of the Prince and Princess caught the infection, and the Duc d'Orléans signed a letter approving certain obscene and ribald attacks on the British Sovereign and her son. This was both shame and pain for the Princess. Philippe's two elder sisters were her dearest friends and one of them had narrowly missed being something closer; her brother had married the daughter of the Duc de Chartres and her interest in the Orléans family had been one of her most agreeable points of contact with Queen Victoria. The Duc d'Orléans was asked point blank whether, or no, the letter was authentic and, in what the Prince described as a "pompous effusion," he made an evasive and equivocal reply; but subsequently admitted, regretted, and apologised for an ill-considered action. The Sovereign was more prompt than the Prince of Wales to forgive what she generously termed an indiscretion and it was not until after many years that King Edward, at the special pleading of his Queen, received the delinquent in audience at Buckingham Palace.

The Prince had accepted two years earlier the post of President of the British Commission for the International Exhibition to be held in Paris in 1900, and Lord Salisbury reminded him that it was only the Press and people, and not the Government, who were unfriendly, and begged him to attend the inaugural ceremony in his official capacity. The



(W & D Downey)

AT THE WEDDING OF PRINCE ALBERT OF CONNAUGHT 1874

For page 144



## INCOGNITO

Prince declined in terms from which there was no appeal; he resented the journalistic insults offered to the Queen, notably in *La Patrie*, even more than those in which he himself was made a target; his appearance in Paris, he said, might almost be construed at home into a slight on the Queen, and if the Queen's uniform which he would have to wear for a great function, were insulted, there might be created an irreparable breach between him and a country which he loved next best to his own. Nothing could move him from his decision, but on the other hand, nothing gave him greater pleasure than to let the Princess spend a few days in Paris and "do" the Exhibition thoroughly.

So, in real incognito, under an assumed name and accompanied only by her daughter, Miss Knollys and General Stevenson, the Princess spent a week of unalloyed enjoyment. She stayed at a hotel in the Champs-Élysées, she drove hither and thither in one of the new electric broughams placed at her disposal by one of the few friends in the secret, she went to the theatres, gazed at the shop windows, ate in restaurants, and exulted in not being recognised. It was a holiday in the fullest sense of the word and the last she would enjoy in that sense, for within a year all shreds of privacy would have to be shed under the light which beats on a throne.

## CHAPTER XIV

BY 1880 the "sweet child" who had pinched his uncle's legs in St. George's Chapel, was beginning to assert himself, and that November he came to England as the guest of Prince and Princess Christian to whose niece he had engaged himself to be married early in the following year. His methods of riding roughshod over any consideration for others were quickly exhibited; he accepted an invitation to be one of the party at Sandringham for the Prince of Wales's birthday, arrived there on the sixth and, without vouchsafing a why or wherefore, abruptly left the house two days later on the eve of the anniversary. His ill manners did nothing to ruffle the Princess but they may have gone some way to determine that there was no need for her to accompany the Prince to Berlin for the wedding festivities. She charged, however, her husband with a message suggesting that Princess Charlotte of Saxe-Meningen, the bridegroom's eldest sister, should spend some part of the summer at Marlborough House. It was a beau geste, was accepted as such, and repeated more than once; the Princess, though very remotely related in blood,<sup>1</sup> bore some resemblance to her aunt by marriage, whose affection she won and, through later years of storm and stress, managed to retain.

<sup>1</sup>George II was their common ancestor.

## MARRIAGE OF PRINCE WILLIAM

The Prince characteristically contrived to combine with a family mission an exercise of the diplomacy in which his soul delighted; his persuasive powers actually wrung from Prince Bismarck a consent to receive Sir Charles Dilke if ever that ultra-Radical baronet should find himself in Berlin; and on his return journey he discussed at length with Gambetta, in Paris, the possibility, and the great advantages, of a commercial treaty with France. Through Lady Ailesbury the Princess learnt with infinite pleasure that Lord Beaconsfield had written to Lady Bradford his sincere admiration of "the Prince of Wales's well-used opportunities of conversing with the two masters of the destinies of Europe."

Berlin beckoned to the Prince again two years later for his sister's silver wedding; once more he went *en garçon* but the Princess had special reason for urging him not to absent himself. Mr. Gladstone had told her that British relations with Germany were a little easier and that Bismarck was very anxious to placate the Prince, and her purely personal feelings were quickly sunk in anything which seemed to tend towards peace and quiet. She was genuinely interested to hear all about the elaborate pageantry which marked the occasion—"costume" always appealed to her—and she only smiled to learn that the Prince had been appointed Colonel of the 5th Pomeranians ("Blücher") Regiment of Hussars in the Prussian Army. It was a very beautiful uniform and the Prince was so fond of uniforms (and knew so much about them), but the Princess could not quite understand why what was so wrong

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

to accept from the Tsar of Russia in 1874 was so right to receive from the Emperor of Germany in 1883.

The Prince of Wales had scarcely returned to London from his nephew's wedding when there came the grim news that Tsar Alexander II—after one desperate but unsuccessful attempt—had been blown to pieces by a bomb flung at him in the open street. A Memorial Service was quickly arranged at the Russian Church in Welbeck Street which the Prince and Princess, with the ready assent of the Queen, attended, the Prince holding a taper through the celebration of the Mass. Both, however, felt that a good deal more than this was required of them; the Princess was quite sure that she should be at the side of her sister at so critical an hour, and the Prince wrote to the Foreign Secretary: "I feel convinced we ought to go to St. Petersburg;" he was quite clear that no other than himself should represent Queen Victoria at the funeral. The Duke of Edinburgh, who had travelled post-haste to the Russian capital, telegraphed that the new Tsar and Tsaritsa would greatly appreciate, and indeed expected, the presence of the Prince and Princess, and the British Ambassador sent an equally urgent message, though more deferential, to the same effect. The Queen hesitated; she laid stress on the risks involved—Russia she always painted to herself in darkest colours,—she told Lord Dufferin that anyhow she would hold him responsible if the unhappy happened, and she only yielded when she heard from Berlin that the Crown Prince was under orders to represent the Kaiser in person.

## ASSASSINATION OF THE TSAR

Queen Victoria's horror at the crime was certainly deepened by kindly personal feelings which she entertained for the victim; "in spite of all his failings," she wrote, "he was a kind and amiable man and has been a good ruler wishing to do his best for his country." And willing to do him honour, she now suggested that the Lord Chamberlain should be *à la suite* of the Prince and Princess; the Prince, however, thought this unnecessary, he had three gentlemen of his own in attendance, and he promised that Sir Dighton Probyn<sup>1</sup> should telegraph twice a day to keep her abreast of every detail of the melancholy occasion.

And more than melancholy the conditions proved to be, the whole atmosphere being charged with gloom and anxiety; the very police force were said to include conspirators in their ranks, and the Prince and Princess were strictly forbidden to show themselves out of doors in the company of the Tsar.

Two days after the funeral ceremonies, fixed for the 27th and 28th of March and as protracted as they were complicated, the Emperor and Empress moved from the Winter Palace to join the Prince and Princess at the Amitchkoff Palace; the Duchess of Edinburgh replying to the Queen, whose letter of sympathy had run along the most affectionate lines, could speak of "Bertie and Alix being with them," while the Tsar wrote of their being "the greatest

<sup>1</sup>Miss Knollys only was in attendance on the Princess; who declined to take any other one of her ladies-in-waiting as these had domestic ties and responsibilities at home.



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

consolation for the Empress and myself in our affliction."

Lord Dufferin heaved a sigh of relief when the heavily guarded train carrying the Prince and the Duke of Edinburgh, reached the frontier on the 31st of March; the Ambassador, with a respectful innuendo of "I told you so," could remind his Sovereign that "H.R.H. has shown all Europe how ready he had been to do a kindness to a near relative in spite of any personal peril to himself."

The Princess remained in Russia for another week; she troubled nothing about her own safety—she could be of some help and that was sufficient—she troubled greatly about the conditions under which her sister must take up her exalted position. Their respective circumstances as they talked things over in the Danish tongue dear to them both, must have stood out in high relief; for the one the utter freedom from any sort of fear whatever when within the four seas of Old England; for the other, virtually life in a splendid prison. The splendour, too, was only within the walls of the Amitchkoff Palace, for the Princess could ruefully compare the dimensions of the courtyard in which, for the time being, the Emperor must exercise his herculean limbs, with the area of a London slum.

Twenty-five years later the Empress Marie accompanied her sister to take tea with their cousin the Duke of Teck<sup>1</sup> on the King's Life Guard. For an hour the Empress stood looking down upon Whitehall; for the first time in a quarter of a century she

<sup>1</sup>Created Marquis of Cambridge 1917.

## DUBLIN

could gaze from a window at the people and traffic in a great city.

"Candidly, I am inclined to think our visit has been a success," the Prince of Wales modestly wrote to Mr. Gladstone at the end of April, and, in a reply which did not err on the side of brevity, the Prime Minister dwelt on "the great service which Your Royal Highness and the Princess have rendered to the Queen and country in spite of the rifts in the perfect harmony of the reception at one or two points of the Royal progress."

The visit to Ireland—largely due to the persistence of Lord Spencer, who would not take "No" from the Queen or anyone else—was undoubtedly a signal success; but undeniable also were the "rifts in the harmony." The announcement that the Prince and Princess were to make a stay in Dublin and tour the country was received with mingled blessings and maledictions. The Loyalists and Moderate Home Rulers cheered, the Irish Nationalists groaned, and the intransigent Fenians in America denounced a Prince (who had few prerogatives except permission to drive down Constitution Hill and under the Horseguards' archway) as a representative of British tyranny; the United Irishmen offered a reward of \$10,000 for his body, dead or alive. The Queen indignantly asked the Home Secretary if any official notice would be taken of this "open monstrous threat;" the Prince and Princess of Wales treated it with cool contempt and, arriving to plan at Dublin Castle on the morning of the 7th of April drove at

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

once, without escort, to an agricultural show at Balls Bridge.

Dublin was on its best, or anyhow its second best, behaviour; the Lord Mayor expressed contrition for having announced that with the arrival of the Royal couple he would haul down the flag which always flew from the Mansion House, a few shop windows were broken but they were so brilliantly illuminated as rather to "ask for trouble," the Levée held by the Prince and the Drawing-room presided over by the Princess were attended far beyond expectations, the homely inspection of artisan dwellings in the poorest part of the City was greatly approved, and there was a brisk demand for photographs of the Princess of Wales in cap and gown as a Doctor of Music, an honour conferred by the new Royal University of Ireland of which she was excessively proud.

Unfortunately, the London press made a little too much play with the smoothness of the Dublin visit and the Nationalists set their teeth and determined to show them at Cork. At Mallow station three M.P's headed a mob who were barely restrained by the police from insulting the travellers, and along the line black flags, with skulls and crossbones painted on them, were derisively waved. The Queen had wired to Lord Spencer<sup>1</sup> to change the route; the telegram was a little belated, but anyhow the Princess was neither shocked nor alarmed and urged that no change should be made in the itinerary.

<sup>1</sup>"The Government," she had written to Mr. Gladstone, "must be *entirely responsible* for *advising* the visit and protecting the Prince and Princess *from all danger*; and the Government *must* pay for it."



AS DOCTOR OF MUSIC, 1885



## CORK

In the purlieus of "rebel Cork" expressions of loyalty—and there were a good many—were drowned in counter cries and curses. Here a young cavalry officer had his chance, and took it. Lord Ernest Hamilton, on whose boyish hands a Princess had wrought a cure, was on duty with his troop of the 11th Hussars in Patrick Street. When in response to the Princess's undismayed and most winning smile, men and women booed and hissed and a miniature coffin was actually thrown into the carriage, he put his hand on his charger's quarters, a trick which always induced a thoroughbred animal to lash out with considerable vigour and, the procedure being repeated, the crowd, in impotent rage and fear, scattered like chaff before the wind.

On the return visit to Dublin no untoward incident occurred; four days—23rd to 26th April—were spent in the North to salvos of Loyalist cheering, Belfast and Londonderry vied with one another in the warmth of their reception and there was a brief, but delightful visit to Baronscourt where there resided with her parents-in-law the Princess's close friend, Lady Hamilton. All this part the Princess would allude to as "very nice" but, in her later recollections, she seemed to find in the stormy scenes at Cork the most interesting memory of the tour.

The Prince was right; the visit had been a genuine success, but while a little oil was being poured on troubled Irish waters, Prince William was doing what little he could to foment trouble between Russia and England. What was known as the Pendjeh incident had created a scare and had been

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

seized on by the political party in power as a peg on which to hang the withdrawal from the Sudan of the troops who had gallantly, but vainly, striven to rescue Gordon. "It is touch and go," the Prince of Wales had written on the 15th March to Lord Wolseley at Dongola, "if we may not be in open hostility with Russia regarding the Afghan frontier." On that same day Prince William was telling the Tsar that he had given the Russian Ambassador in Berlin "a few interesting little notes regarding the number of Indian and English Regiments which the English are preparing to concentrate at Rawal Pindi;" "the language and cartoon in *Punch*," he added, "are irritant to the last degree." At the end of March the Russian troops routed an Afghan force near Pendjeh, and for some days the war cloud hung pretty black. Happily, there arrived just now at the Court of St. James's the most urbane of Ambassadors, Baron de Staal, who set himself at once to allay British apprehensions while he scornfully falsified another acidulated note in which Prince William dared to tell the Tsar that the Prince of Wales was opposed to any settlement of the dispute other than by the sword. The converse was the precise truth; while the Prince of Wales was pressing on the two Governments, who soon saw daylight, the services of King Christian as arbitrator, subsequent evidence goes to show that the Princess, helped and heartened by an Ambassador, who was soon to become *persona grata* at Marlborough House, played, *sub rosa*, a by no means negligible part as peacemaker.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>vide page 233.

## CHAPTER XV

FOR the tenants of Marlborough House life had long since settled itself into a well-observed routine. The Prince had no objection to routine so long as it was punctuated with a good deal of "running about;" the Princess, on the other hand, once "settled down" was a little difficult to dislodge, especially from Sandringham, and not infrequently her departure would be, rather distractingly, postponed from day to day. The "season" was followed sometimes by Goodwood, for which she cared little, always by Cowes, for which she cared much, and where she would remain with her daughters on board the *Osborne* after the Prince had gone to seek the mild cure and enjoy the cosmopolitan society of Homburg or Marienbad. A short stay in Denmark would generally precede a longer stay in Scotland, and the late autumn and winter were sacred, anyhow for the Princess, to the Norfolk home. Accommodation at Abergeldie was limited, but the house in the Highlands was always as full as a drum; at Sandringham a constant overflow of guests, whenever the Prince was in residence, necessitated the construction of a lodge where bachelors were comfortably accommodated and which later developed into the habitation known as York Cottage.

Under their kindly sway English Society assumed



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

a new and brighter complexion, and the English aristocracy came back into its own. Taken as a class these had been looked upon with scant favour by Prince Albert, who thought them lacking in stability and disposed to frivolity; the entourage he prescribed for the Queen comprised their own kinsfolk, mostly of German extraction, high officials, and a careful sprinkling of the great territorial magnates.

The Prince and Princess of Wales saw to it that their door should be much more widely opened. Passports to Marlborough House, and even to Sandringham, were offered to anyone who could claim real and honourable distinction, whether inherited or acquired; they delighted in entertaining and they were quite willing to be entertained, in certain recognised circumstances, themselves. Etiquette on these occasions was not relaxed but was rendered attractive rather than prohibitive. Lady Wolseley, in one of her letters to her lord, spoke of the dinners at Windsor Castle as being very "whispery;" the dinners and parties presided over by the Prince and Princess were gay with talk and laughter, but the talk was often very good and the laughter had no taint of "foolish jesting."

And their hospitality was large; at Marlborough House there were two balls, with sometimes a children's ball as well, every year, in addition to constant dinner-parties, and at least one Garden Party; then the Duke of Devonshire, father of the Lord Hartington who figured so prominently in their lives, lent them Chiswick House, which was very convenient for the so-called breakfasts, and for

## HOSPITALITY

intimate Sunday gatherings when guests would often come to tea and stay till midnight had sounded.

But Chiswick proved to be a very costly luxury and with constantly increasing expenses the pretty villa, after a few years' keen enjoyment of it, had to be given up. Indeed there had been rumours that the outgoings of the Prince and Princess had so largely exceeded their income that the Prince was over half a million in debt; *The Times* newspaper was invoked and an explicit denial of a malicious rumour which had found its way into lesser journals, was published.

But the public were reminded that, owing to the Queen's self-imposed seclusion, the Prince and Princess of Wales were carrying out official and social duties which could scarcely have been contemplated when their marriage settlement was drawn up. It was even murmured that, if the Sovereign chose to delegate to her Heir Apparent and his Consort functions which normally she would perform herself, the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall should be reinforced by some voluntary grant from her own Civil List.

The Queen declined the dilemma. So long as she worked with heart and brain in the public service—and of this there could be no doubt—she claimed exemption from "fatiguing State ceremonies" which could be "equally well performed by other members of the Royal Family." She was sure—and here again she was indisputably right—as to its being for the happiness of England, and for the advancement of her swelling Empire, that her tiny hands should grip

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

the sceptre so long as there was a grain of strength left in them. She was equally sure—and here she was on less firm ground—that her sway over the affections of the people remained sole and undisputed. Her protest had pathos as well as passion in it when, with something less than her usual perfect accuracy, she wrote to the King of the Belgians: "No one stops when Bertie and Alix drive through the Mall or runs as they always did, and do doubly, now for me."

To catch a glimpse of the Sovereign who reigned in mystery, scarcely less than in majesty, was certainly an experience to be engraved in memory; to catch the eye of the Princess of Wales, as she seemingly bent towards *you*, was to feel that a personal link had been formed, and that it had been forged entirely at her pleasure. Day in, day out, year in, year out, men, women and children would wait patiently for the Princess to pass in her barouche with its 17-hand bays, bowing—as she alone could bow—from *side to side* on her course to and from the parks and streets. "I used to pass Marlborough House on my way to the Travellers' Club," wrote Count Beust, the Austrian Ambassador; "it was the hour when the Princess usually took her drive, and although in England time is money, thousands of people were assembled there daily waiting to see Her Royal Highness drive out."

And here was no mere tribute to womanly beauty which Time, in truth, did little to dim and less than nothing to blur. She was a bride of eighteen summers when London caught its first sight of her; she was a

## THE PRINCESS

widow nearing her eightieth winter when she left London to return no more, but from the first of her appearances to the last, the rapture which greeted her coming never varied in volume or sincerity.

Ouida, with her picturesque, if not always precise, logic, declared that middle age often spells for a man his apotheosis, for a woman always her *dégringolade*. Nothing could be further from the truth than this dictum if applied to the Princess of Wales; for a quarter of a century successive years only seemed to enhance her physical attractions, and at a State Ball in the late eighties, after that searching test, the electric light, had been installed, one of the diplomatic guests could write: "I have never seen such beauty in any capital in Europe, starting with the Princess of Wales and following up with Lady Dudley, Lady de Clifford, and others."

In the "two dreadful first years of loneliness" which followed Prince Albert's death, the Queen completely secluded herself. She reluctantly allowed the Prince of Wales to hold a *Levéé* on her behalf early in 1853, and the first duty which fell to the Princess of Wales was to deputise for her at a Drawing-room; there was such a "rush" to be present, or "presented" on the occasion, that the carriage rank stretched from Harley Street to the Mall, and some of the two thousand ladies took six hours on the way to the Palace and half that time after passing the Throne before they could reach their homes and refresh their parched mouths with a cup of tea.

Until King Edward and Queen Alexandra institu-

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

ted evening Courts, Drawing-rooms in the daytime, four times a year, were the rule, and every lady admitted within an inelastic social cordon must pass through the Throne Room at least biennially. These functions were truly formidable affairs; to be *décolletée* with the sun streaming through the windows, however becoming to débutantes, was very trying for dowagers who had already been targets for ribald remarks from the crowds who assembled in the Mall and thrust their heads through the carriage windows; the Court trains were trains of solid silk, not wisps of filmy material, ostrich feathers piled high and mounted on "lappets" caused many a brow to ache, and lips, unreddened, thirsted for even a glass of water. No "refreshments" were offered, not from any motive of economy but because it was thought they would give to a Court ceremonial the semblance of a party. The defile of dipping, and hand-kissing, dames and damsels caused Queen Victoria the same feeling of nausea which she experienced in the glass coach, and "I left Alix to take my place," is a recurring entry in her diary, after she emerged from complete retirement. At times also the Princess would "hold" the Drawing-room herself; the announcement would cause no diminution in the attendance, and each and every matron and maid could depend on the same smiling recognition. But there was once when the Princess did not smile. On the list of those to make their obeisance was entered the name of a lady of whose conduct she strongly disapproved; the Princess declined to hold the Drawing-room unless the lady in question

## DRAWING-ROOMS

abstained from appearing. It was suggested she should plead indisposition and allow one of her sisters-in-law to stand in her place; the alternative was negatived; it was a false excuse, she protested, and she would not allow it to be offered. The Princess of Wales was lenient, almost to a fault, but if a line were drawn, it was heavily scored; nor on this occasion was there any wish to mask the fact that she declined to receive the offender who, to do her justice, relieved the tension at the eleventh hour by asking permission to be excused from making her curtsy on that particular day.

In the Prince of Wales's social engagements and pursuits the Princess took large share up to, but never beyond, the margin of entire discretion. To secure the Prince for any entertainment was at once a signal honour and a safe insurance for success; the presence of the Princess seemed to light up the whole occasion and to lend to it a dignity, without undue restraint, which perhaps only her contemporaries can wholly appreciate.

The supreme cachet which a large and emblazoned card of invitation would carry, was "to have the honour of meeting Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales," and at the great houses, most of which have fallen a prey to the house-breaker or the speculator, they would enjoy themselves thoroughly and see to it that others did the same. For the "square" dances a "set" would be formed of their more intimate friends, and when the Princess valed—the more energetic polka she eschewed—it was customary for any others than

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

members of the Royal Family to leave the space vacant for her to take her customary two turns of the room; occasionally there would be a cotillon which she approved largely because it gave her the opportunity to bestow notice and little souvenirs on rather shy guests. Any sort of costume ball too found favour; she frankly liked the fun of "dressing up," and even more seeing others dressed up, and not least the servants for their fancy dress dance at Sandringham.

At Marlborough House and Apsley House in 1874 she danced, with Lord Hartington as her partner, in the Venetian Quadrille, and a keen observer, Lord Ronald Gower, could write: "The Prince looked well and gained in height in a Van Dyck costume and, as usual, the Princess was the most beautiful and graceful woman in the place"; at Lady Cork's charming "Calico Ball" she chose Lady Granville for her partner in a Ladies' Quadrille; for the famous Waverley Ball she appeared as Marie Stuart, and in the Jubilee Year she shone as Marguerite de Valois at Devonshire House when Henry Irving, in his rose-red Cardinal's robes, swept through the rooms and murmured to a friend, "these ladies and gentlemen look very fine but they don't seem quite familiar with the characters they represent." And the little imp of innocent mischief, who often resided with her, had full scope at the Marchesa Santurce's masked ball, where she arrived with Mrs. Standish in a private carriage; alike in figure and wearing precisely the same dominoes they could "intrigue" to their hearts' content. And so indistinguishable were they from one another

## COSTUME BALLS

that when dawn was beginning to appear, the Prince of Wales approached the French lady and suggested it was time to go home.

For race meetings she cared little though she cared much for her husband's racehorses, because they were horses, not because they were potential winners of rich stakes. But she thoroughly enjoyed driving her four-in-hand of ponies on an "off" day to a point on the Ascot race-course where she could see the start for the Hunt Cup or the Wokingham Stakes; and once, closely veiled, she was emboldened to thread her way with two friends in attendance, through the jostling crowds and take a seat for a quarter of an hour on the Duke of Beaufort's coach in the Four-in-Hand enclosure.

For cards she had no sort of aptitude and could never fix her attention for five consecutive minutes on any game of whist or bridge; she had a horror of playing for high stakes, but once at Sandringham thoroughly enjoyed sixpenny baccarat with a Chancellor of the Exchequer<sup>1</sup> in the bank; she said she felt so sure of being paid if she won. There were some forms of gambling as to which she was explicit in abhorrence. The pigeon-shooting at Hurlingham represented to her the maximum of cruelty with the minimum of so-called sport, and she frowned on the practice so heavily as to render it unfashionable and thus bring about its discontinuance.

In her husband's intimacy with leading Jewish financiers, the Princess had little concern, making a marked exception in favour of the Rothschilds.

<sup>1</sup>Lord Goschen.



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Their wealth weighed nothing with her, but she spoke often of their care for the poor and of their method of spontaneous and wide distribution of help in every form. To Miss Alice Rothschild, sprung from a Vienna branch of the family but domiciled in England, special favour was so far extended that she was actually permitted to see Queen Alexandra in her Coronation robes before the start for the Abbey.

The Princess of Wales's acquaintance became large and very varied but no face was ever forgotten and very seldom the occasion on which that face was last seen. In the comprehensive bow which she gave at the Opera before taking her seat, she would "spot" anyone in the house whom she knew or of whom she knew anything; and of each one she had something to say to her companions in the Royal Box. Nothing seemed to escape her notice and to those she knew fairly well, she would talk eagerly, with a good deal of gesture and a very quick sense of humour and to those she knew very well she would display an unsuspected but deliciously pungent gift of mimicry without malice.

Before she was entirely conversant with idiomatic English, conversational crises would occasionally arise, not from lack of interest in the subject but from a tendency to anticipate what she thought was *going to be said*. Thus it happened that at a dinner-party her neighbour on the right discussed carnations with her. Presently it was time for her to talk to her neighbour on the left, and they communed about dachshunds. Once more the tide of talk turned, and

## SANDRINGHAM

her neighbour on the right began again. He had picked up dachshunds from the left and continued to speak of them. The Princess was not listening, but remembering that he was the "carnation man," replied: "And I like those great fat pink ones that smell so good."

However enjoyable life elsewhere, the happiest time of all was at Sandringham, and the pity of it was that for years the Princess never saw it in its summer beauty. She loved every stick and stone in the place, every cottager in his cottage, every flower in the garden, every horse in the stables, and every dog in the kennels, and she knew that she was beloved by everybody, and everything, there. She liked to remember how much she had been in her husband's thoughts when he arranged all the details of their country home, and the quiet weeks she spent in it were more to her liking than the large parties which, three or four times a year, met to kill hecatombs of game. On these occasions, in the rôle of perfect hostess and because the Prince liked her to do so, she would come out to luncheon in a tent with the "sportsmen," but the sight of a heap of dead and wounded birds moved her with pity rather than pleasure. All birds were her protégés. "*Madame, il vous mangera,*" cried an excited foreign guest when she allowed a parrot, who pecked at everyone else, to take a lump of sugar from between her lips. She shook her head in amused denial of the mere idea; none of God's creatures, she was sure, would wish to do her any harm.

The one sport she really relished was hunting,

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

although she always hoped the "poor fox" would get away. The squires and farmers at the Meet were so hearty in their welcome, the gallop was as wine in her veins, Sir Dighton was such a splendid pilot for the Beloved Lady as he always called her, the fences were less formidable than the rabbit holes with which Norfolk land is pockmarked, sandwiches and slices of cold plum pudding were "such a change" from a formal luncheon. For some of the visitors to Sandringham hunting was a very qualified pleasure and they would rather ruefully accept the offer of a mount which the Prince in friendly fashion pressed on them. These unfortunates would excite the sympathy of the Princess who was quick to detect their disabilities for the saddle and would suggest they should go home as soon as the hounds began to draw. But it happened once that a gentleman, of whose mode of life she strongly, if silently, disapproved, found himself in great difficulties with a rather fractious mare, and to her "pilot" the Princess murmured: "He is being punished for his naughtiness."

The dairy was another delight; she introduced there, quite successfully, the Danish method of making butter and, rather unsuccessfully, tried her hand at making it herself. And then she was always grateful to the Prince for all he had done to beautify the little church to which she would carry many of her troubles; she took no little pains about the choir and was very pleased when invited to choose the hymns, although sometimes it had to be pointed out that the choice was not quite appropriate to the

## MUSIC

service. "The sun is sinking fast" was a mis-statement anyhow until after 4 p.m.

An "accomplished musician" is a stock term to which Queen Alexandra was never quite entitled, but she had been well "grounded," she was a quick and constant learner, she could read easily at sight and had an acute sense of rhythm; anyhow she was sincerely, and seriously, devoted to music. Seldom was her seat in the front row vacant when Hallé, Norma Neruda and Piatti were on the platform for a Monday Pop. at St. James's Hall, and she was a good deal more than willing to listen to these and other serious artists at Lady Revelstoke's rather "severe" and very select concerts; in later years it was with real reluctance she would forgo a Wagner night at the Opera, while the evenings at Lady Ripon's villa, when the brothers De Reszke, Melba and Calvé would give of their best, and where Destinn and Caruso "tried over" *Madame Butterfly*, were sheer delight. She could tell these artists that at Copenhagen, as a child, she had heard Jenny Lind when the Swedish singer's voice had all its freshness; she forgot to tell them of how large a part she herself had played in starting the Royal College for Music. And Jean and Edouard would come to Marlborough House, and later to Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, and they brought their constant friend and accompanist, Mr. Amherst Webber, and Mr. Webber was asked for the big shoots at Sandringham; he did not shoot, but after tea he would be taken upstairs to his hostess's sitting-room, and for two hours or more there would be duets on two pianos, and the

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

performers never tired of Schumann's Quartettes and Schumann's Variations; and once, towards the close of his years, the great Joachim came down and after dinner played the violin for two hours; Queen Alexandra was enraptured, King Edward, though he courteously concealed it, was a trifle bored.

Twice the Princess of Wales travelled to Bayreuth and once she persuaded the Prince, who was really nothing loth, to go with her. She liked the simple lodgings in the town and meals "the same as any one else" in the restaurants, and she vastly enjoyed the trips to Nuremberg and to the Chiemsee for a view of the King of Bavaria's freak Versailles. But the music was "the thing," and she never missed a moment or a note of it, nor would she allow anyone to be of her party who was not bona fide "musical." There would be room in the two boxes reserved for her for Lady de Grey, Reginald Lister, Seymour Fortescue, Miss Yznaga, because they were Wagner devotees and would utter no word from the rise to the fall of the curtain. Cares and troubles, and the Princess had at least her fair share of them, were forgotten while she soaked herself in the music which appealed to her more and more; to the close of her life she would refer again and again to the happy holidays at Bayreuth and would recount with great glee how Frau Wagner "snubbed" her—it was such a novel and refreshing experience.

As her love for German Opera and chamber music waxed, her taste for French and Italian works waned, and for Opera Comique, i.e., Opera with spoken words, she cared little. But for Church music she

## RELIGION

cared greatly; she loved the services at St. Paul's Cathedral and quite understood why Gounod said that nowhere else was his Mass so admirably rendered; she was more than an occasional worshipper at St. Andrew's, Wells Street, and in Holy Week she would be drawn to St. Ann's, Soho, by the Passion Music, and at least once she allowed herself to take part in the service of Benediction at the Oratory and listen to the liquid notes of a specially golden treble in the *Salutaris Hostia* and *Tantum Ergo*.

Religious music was in truth part and parcel of a piety which was as sincere as it was entirely unostentatious. "Queen Alexandra," Lord Halifax told the present writer, "took a real and keen interest in the teaching of the Church, for no one could have worshipped in a church like All Saints, Margaret Street, as she did, without having a real and personal interest in the religion taught there.

"She was interested in all Church matters and I have more than once known her make purchases which could only be suggested by a care for the externals of Church worship, and a desire to promote that worship to the best of her ability.

"I can recall her sympathy with the lives and work of the Sisters in various Anglican Communities, and I can specially call to mind her eagerness to hear of their labours at such times as those displayed by them in any epidemic, such as that of the cholera. Knowing her as I did I should always have felt assured of her real sympathy in all matters affecting Church principles, bearing on the well-being of individual souls and the general welfare of the Church."

## CHAPTER XVI

"FOUND all the family assembled at Marlborough House, Alix looking lovely in grey and white and more like a bride just married than a silver one of twenty-five years." So runs an entry in Queen Victoria's diary for the 10th of March, 1888; the occasion was a silver wedding, the blending of grey with white was due to the death of the Emperor William which had occurred the day before. "*Der alte Kerl*," the old Duchess of Cambridge murmured on hearing the news; at least she had outlived the all-powerful Monarch who had "stolen the dearest countries her heart had loved."

The Emperor Frederick's reign lasted but a hundred days, and on the Ascot racecourse there came to the Royal Family a mournful telegram; the brother-in-law for whom they, one and all, had genuine affection and admiration, had succumbed at Potsdam to an incurable and agonising disease.

The Princess of Wales had not thought it necessary even to attend the Memorial Service for the Emperor William, but here was quite a different matter. She was sure that she could be of some comfort to the stricken Empress Frederick who would have a good deal more than the blow of her bereavement to bear, and within twenty-four hours, with the Prince, she was on her way to Berlin. Her surmise was correct;



THE PRINCESS OF WALES, 1880





## THE EMPRESS FREDERICK

she found throughout a week's stay that humiliation after humiliation was being piled upon her sister-in-law; her palace—whose very name, by Imperial decree, was to be altered—was surrounded, (not to protect, but to insult her,) with a cordon of soldiers, and an Empress was virtually her son's prisoner.

Nothing that womanly, and sisterly, sympathy could do to alleviate the situation was left undone; there had always been an underlying kindly feeling between the two women and it suddenly ripened into fast friendship and utter understanding. The one mother had quickly tasted of a son's tyranny; a cup of sorrow was soon to be held to the lips of the other. For twelve years their correspondence was regular and intimate, and advice offered by one or the other was seldom wholly set aside.

Remembering the bitterness of feeling which pervades an invaded country, anyhow until a generation has passed away, the Princess thought it imprudent of the Empress Frederick to pay a visit to Paris in 1891, and warned her accordingly; she was none the less grieved to hear of the rather unmannerly treatment accorded to a very unhappy widow, but she treated with scornful silence the Kaiser's proposal that, as a sort of vendetta, the Prince of Wales should accompany him on a tour through Alsace Lorraine.

And the year after the silver wedding a still youthful mother, as youthful in character as in appearance, must recognise not only that the boys had grown into manhood but that the girls were fast growing into womanhood; that summer, during the Ascot

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

week, her eldest daughter was betrothed to Lord Fife.<sup>1</sup> There was some conventional criticism of the engagement owing to the nearness of Princess Louise to the Throne; the three eldest sons of George III had died without leaving issue, and it was pointed out that by some unhappy possibility a Queen of England would have for her Consort one who was far removed from Royal rank. The rather flimsy objections were brushed aside by the parents; although the bridegroom elect was some eighteen years older than the bride, it was purely a love match, and off went the Princess of Wales to Windsor to ask the Queen's consent, which was given without demur. The Sovereign had already laid down that what a Sovereign's daughter could do, a Sovereign's cousin could not; she had forbidden a marriage between Princess Mary of Cambridge and a Peer of the Realm but—being strongly opposed to any Prussian Alliance—had gladly permitted her own daughter to become engaged to the Marquis of Lorne. She noted, at once, in her diary, "that my beloved grandchild should have her home in dear Scotland and in the dear Highlands is an additional satisfaction to me." It was the whiff of white heather which was again so sweet in her nostrils.

A letter went the same day to "My dear Fife," in which she signed herself "Your very affectionate future Grandmamma." The bridegroom's father, she remembered, had been an early visitor to Balmoral and a fine type of Scotsman; his very weaknesses of the flesh had been all Scotch. As for the rank, there

<sup>1</sup>Earl Fife was created Earl of Fife in the British Peerage in 1885.

## THE DUCHESS OF FIFE

was no difficulty; the Queen would at once raise her future grandson in the peerage, and as Duke of Fife on the 27th of July he could be married to Princess Louise in the Private Chapel of Buckingham Palace.

Then, on a May<sup>1</sup> morning in 1891, the Home Secretary hurried to Sheen—Home Secretaries often had to hurry on these occasions—and the Princess of Wales, so little changed since she had brought her own firstborn into the world, was now a grandmother.

Only one marriage from Marlborough House was to be associated with international politics. In the autumn of 1895 Princess Maud, the youngest and most high-spirited of the three sisters, became engaged to the Prince Charles of Denmark. "In her cousin," the Prince of Wales then told an old friend, "she has made an excellent choice, as he is both charming and good-looking." Ten years later, when Norway and Sweden dissolved a partnership in which one of them was incontestably the "predominant partner," the Norwegian vote for a new monarch was accorded almost with one voice to Prince Charles, and experience proved that judgment to be entirely sound.

The Prince of Wales seized the opportunity of his eldest daughter's marriage to raise anew the question of what financial support should be given his children from the public purse. His own suggestions, which he embodied in a memorandum and personally handed to Mr. Gladstone, were but little modified by

<sup>1</sup>Princess Arthur of Connaught, born 17th of May, 1891, who until the birth of the Prince of Wales stood as Heiress to the Throne in her generation.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

the Committee of twenty-three, representing all the colours of the House of Commons and nominated by the Leader of the Lower House, Mr. W. H. Smith. The eldest son of the Heir Apparent was to receive an annuity of £10,000 to be increased on his marriage to £25,000; every other son was to receive £8,000 a year as a bachelor and £10,000 a year as a married man; each daughter would have £3,000 a year and a dowry of £10,000. The Princess was delighted to understand that her children would be adequately provided for, but finance was never her forte. Her personal wants were comparatively few and simple, but other people "wanted" so much and so often and she could never refuse them; whatever her income she would always have found difficulty in "putting by." Her pension list was long and large and her pensioners always seemed to enjoy renewed leases of life; she was *donnante* to the last degree and would give for the sheer pleasure of making anyone happy. The begging letters she received were as the sands of the sea, and nobody could persuade her to disregard them. A specimen of these she sent down to her Private Secretary one morning with a pencilled note: "Send the man £10." On inquiry it was found that the individual in question was not only entirely unsatisfactory but at the moment was undergoing a week's imprisonment. The Private Secretary duly represented the facts, only to receive the injunctive "Send the £10; the poor man will want it when he comes out." Her almsgiving was the one matter on which she would resent contradiction; there was another occasion when the Private Secretary minuted

## CHARITY

an instruction with the suggestion that £5 was rather too large a sum to give the applicant; back came the note with £5 struck out and £10 substituted. From his Roman prison Paul prayed that his special friends, the Galatians, might abound in love with all judgment. Whether Queen Alexandra's *caritas* was compounded precisely according to the Pauline prescription may be open to question; of the richness of the chief ingredient there can be no doubt. Napoleon had no fixed rules for fighting, Dickens observed none in writing, Queen Alexandra's bounties may have been a little undisciplined, but the "charity" which dictated them welled from her heart and without this "more excellent way" all other virtues, we have been warned, are comparatively negligible.

While her capacity for giving was unbounded, she had little appetite for acquisition. She knew little and cared less about the intrinsic worth of any present, she only seemed to appreciate the thought which propelled it. A priceless bit of jade, the envoi of a millionaire, would be noted in a vitrine alongside some childish gift of which the purchase price would have been well under five shillings. And if any *arrière pensée* could be detected, her annoyance would be manifest. A lady, a personal friend, very anxious to secure Queen Alexandra's presence for an autumn entertainment, sent her in the summer a choice miniature. Dear —— was warmly thanked but the gift was returned with the gentle reminder that "my birthday is not until the 1st December." And in her heart the demon of covetousness found

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

no lodging; there was at no time any wish either to possess or inherit the goods of another. She was one of those happy women who can linger over a lovely flower without any longing to pick it, or admire a fine jewel without any burning wish to wear it. A legacy would only have a sentimental value in her eyes, and when King Edward presided over the distribution of Queen Victoria's personal belongings among his sisters, she simply could not understand why any one of them should even wish to be preferred before another.

Sandringham in 1891 had been under something of a November cloud. Domestic circumstances had inclined the Princess to alter her annual programme and protract indefinitely her absence from England. Instead of returning home after her usual visit to Copenhagen, she made her way with her daughters to the Tsar's country place at Lividia and proposed a long visit to her sister. Except when the Prince was travelling in India she had never spent her birthday apart from him—birthdays the House of Hanover regarded as sacrosanct and the sense of separation was, perhaps a little belatedly, reflected in a letter in which the Prince rather sadly suggested that to have left the fifty best years of life behind him was scarcely a subject for congratulations, however well-meaning. Then an ugly fire broke out and did a good deal of damage to some of the "good things." And in the midst of the festivities, shorn of much of their usual gaiety, Prince George was seen to be so unwell that his father broke up the party and brought his

## AN ENGAGEMENT

son to London to learn that he was suffering from enteric fever; the germ had been contracted by the young sailor when on a visit to his soldier brother at the Curragh. The fever ran high and anxiety still prevailed when the Princess, after travelling continuously for six days, reached her son's bedside; it was only just dissipated when from Luton<sup>1</sup> came a note, hastily but lovingly perused; her eldest boy was engaged to the daughter of "beloved Princess Mary."

She spoke at once to a very dear friend of the "joy" she found in the betrothal; she was sure the marriage would be for the happiness of the "dear children" and would also be a blessing for the country. The "joy" was perfectly genuine. Religious difficulties had forbidden any idea of a Latin princess, one of whom had been very dear to the Princess of Wales; the bare idea of a German-imported daughter-in-law had made her shudder. She had known "Princess May" from babyhood and had watched her grow through all the stages of adolescence in strength and fineness of character: an inflexible sense of right and wrong had been mated to manners no less winning because they were at first a little shy; here too was beauty of face and figure, and this was all to the good for the Princess of Wales, like all really beautiful women, delighted in the good looks of others. From Princess Mary she had never had any secrets, and it was "rather nice" to share with her the secret for twenty-four hours until the young bridegroom could make his bow at Windsor and secure the eager consent of the Queen.

<sup>1</sup>The residence of M. de Falbe, sometime Danish Minister.



## CHAPTER XVII

THE death of Prince Hohenlohe that month made a perceptible gap in a circle of intimate friends; he and his wife, Victor and Lolo, had been so much at Marlborough House, and their daughters had been the playmates and constant companions of the young Princesses. On a raw December morning the Prince of Wales attended his cousin's funeral at Sunningdale, and he expected his eldest son to accompany him. His own robust constitution and tireless energy were apt to render him a little impatient of the Duke of Clarence's<sup>1</sup> delicacy of physique and demeanour; the young man, rather painfully aware of this, would allow no weather conditions to prevent his following his father's wishes, nor would he admit, through the Christmas festivities, that he felt shivery and out of sorts.

It was a joyous—although chiefly a family—party which assembled at Sandringham for the New Year, but Prince George, just then promoted to the rank of Commander, was recovering full health and strength when on the 9th of January a specially vicious form of so-called Russian influenza, then prevalent, gripped his elder brother.

There were to be three days and nights of poignant anxiety during which his mother scarcely left her

<sup>1</sup>Prince Albert Victor was raised to the Peerage, May 24th, 1892.

## THE DUKE OF CLARENCE

boy's bedside—and then upon his mother's breast there died a Prince who, from end to end of his short life, was guiltless of an unkind word and seemed incapable of an unkind action. Life in a cavalry regiment,<sup>1</sup> with all its give and take, had done much to develop and strengthen a fine character marked by unselfishness, simplicity of mind and total absence of anything like "side;" however unsatisfactory are hackneyed phrases, the chronicler used no sentimental figure of speech when he asserted that the Duke of Clarence had the faculty of making himself beloved by all sorts and conditions of men.

With her own hands the mother performed the last offices of care and tenderness; the prayers and hymns at the simple Memorial Service in the church hard by were her own choice. She would have given very much if her son could have slept under the shadow of that little church where she had so often knelt with him, but she knew that circumstance demanded a military funeral at Windsor for a last tribute and a cold tomb in St. George's Chapel for a last resting place. Letters and telegrams rained in from every capital in Europe and every corner of the Empire; the Poet Laureate penned some hurried verses which were rather poor stuff, Mr. Gladstone, evoking memories of his childhood, likened the tragedy to the death of Princess Charlotte. The Princess of Wales was a little vague about Princess Charlotte, anyhow at that moment, but she remembered dear Mr. Gladstone had written a beautiful letter when her son came of age; and when his own son had died

<sup>1</sup>The Xth Hussars.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

a few months ago he had said that he "believed with all his mind and all his heart that the beloved one had gone into eternal rest." Popular grief was very genuine because popular imagination was stirred to the quick, and something like a sob of sorrow seemed to shake the country; everyone was very kind, and no one kinder than Queen Victoria; but a spring in the mother's life was broken, and there are some springs which no kindness can mend; God in His awful wisdom had inflicted a wound so deep that it would never wholly heal, but then there are some wounds which are the cleaner for being kept open.<sup>1</sup>

The Queen would willingly have come from Osborne to the funeral but her daughter-in-law begged her not to take the risk of cold and fatigue, and the same message was sent to the Duke of Cambridge at Cannes; the sad story had, however, to be heard at first hand with all its details, and the Queen was sure that a few quiet days in the Isle of Wight would be beneficial. Perhaps, however, she had scarcely realised what the shock and strain at Sandringham had been; "poor darling Alix," she wrote, "looks the picture of grief and misery and he very ill; dear Alix looked lovelier than ever in her

<sup>1</sup>Two years later she was writing to Lady Granby who had just suffered the same sorrow: "I was so touched that you should have turned to me who has had to bear the same despairing sorrow which nothing on earth can ever lessen or change, which must be borne with patience and submission to the will of God. Our only consolation is that they are safe in the keeping of our Heavenly Father and waiting for us there, and that they were spared all the world's pain and sorrow. And pray God these dear ones may have links to draw us up to him and Eternal Life."

Princess of Wales to Marchioness of Granby 1894.

## IN MOURNING

deep mourning and a long black veil, with a point, on her head."

A few weeks were spent in strict seclusion at Eastbourne, the Duke of Devonshire having offered his glorified villa by the seaside; with his succession to the title, his long-contemplated marriage to the widowed Duchess of Manchester was now a matter of months, and his guests would find this a matter for eager congratulation; Hartington and Duchess Louise were both such old and valued and such worldly-wise friends.

Then there was a month at Cap Martin where the Prince and Princess received, and paid, no visits, and kept wholly apart from their *habitués* of the Riviera. Someone, accidentally meeting the Prince, asked him if he found it rather dull: "What on earth does it matter?" was the answer, "if only in any way it does the Princess any good."

They could not, and would not, be absent from the golden wedding of the King and Queen of Denmark at Copenhagen, but they took no part in the festivities, and the only diplomatist they saw was the Russian Minister; to him there was expressed the kindly hope that the forthcoming meeting between the Tsar and the Kaiser might prove beneficial. The remainder of the year was to be a period of deep mourning, and Time's healing process was to prove very slow and not wholly effective.

Madame Waddington,<sup>1</sup> going to wish the Princess

<sup>1</sup>Madame Waddington, seven years later, wrote of the Princess at Cowes as quite unchanged, just the same slim figure and light step, and very simply dressed in mourning for the Duke of Edinburgh.

### *QUEEN ALEXANDRA*

good-bye, after ten years' tenure of the French Embassy, found her in deep black, "some soft stuff without any ornament," looking sad but the "same slight youthful figure;" she only smiled a little when the conversation turned on her first grandchild who was "a dear little child, talks a great deal, trots about everywhere and calls me Grannie."

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE Princess was abroad in April when she received the message that at Sheen Lodge the Duke of York<sup>1</sup> had proposed to, and been accepted by, Princess Victoria Mary of Teck. Twenty years earlier on the 3rd of June, a note from Marlborough House had gone to Princess Mary: "To-day is Georgie's birthday; may your little girl come and play with him?" Now the two constant playmates were to be married, and a mother knew that in the eyes of the Sovereign and of the people her son had made the wisest, as well as the happiest, choice. And she was happy it should be so, and happy that the 6th of July was kept as high holiday throughout the Sovereign's dominions, and that the crowds in London exceeded those at the Jubilee, and that two days later the Sovereign addressed a letter of gratitude for the welcome given to her "dear grandson's beloved bride."

"Dear Alix looked very pale at the wedding," the Queen remarked, but she looked her own lovely self gowned in creamy white and priceless lace. For after that January day in 1892 she eschewed bright colours, but she had no wish to impose the slightest sadness on any gathering and her half mourning was never

<sup>1</sup>The Queen on her birthday had created Prince George Duke of York, Earl of Inverness and Lord Rothsay.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

ostentatious. Gold and silver and purple and pearl grey would often be woven into her black, and her gowns would be as carefully chosen, and thought out, as ever, but however rich the material the hue must always be sober.

The Princess of Wales never perhaps "set" a fashion; she certainly never "followed" one; she had the happy knack of always being rightly dressed and never "over-dressed," for the occasion, whatever it might be, and of always being a shade better dressed than any other woman present. Much time and thought were spent on her clothes, and money was not spared if it were right to be resplendent. But youthful experience had been burnt into her; the Princess knew the precise value of what she ordered, whether from her London or Paris milliners; she disliked anything which suggested unnecessary extravagance, and would hold up her hands in horror at the prices she was told trans-Continental ladies or *nouvelles riches* would pay for their gowns.

The King and Queen of Denmark came over for the wedding and although Queen Louise excused herself, as being "too tired," from the Buckingham Palace "reception" on the wedding eve, everything went quite smoothly between her and Queen Victoria at the wedding luncheon.

The Tsarevich, now himself betrothed to the daughter of the Grand Duke of Hesse, who was on a visit to England, stayed on for his cousin's wedding, and the Queen gave him a Garter, and just a year later when the Princess, and her daughters, went to St. Petersburg for the wedding of the Grand Duchess



(W & D Dooney)

QUEEN ALEXANDRA WITH THE PRINCE KING

*Facing page 184*





*DUKE AND DUCHESS OF YORK*

Xenia, he told her that his stay at Marlborough House "for George's wedding will be one of my happiest recollections." And then, best of all, on a June evening that same year, she was to hasten from Ascot to White Lodge as fast as her big bay horses could draw her, and in a few hours could whisper: "My first joy since" when a tiny grandson was placed in her arms.

And in the autumn Russia once more beckoned with dark finger to the Princess. At the end of September the Tsar, a Hercules in manly strength but suffering from an insidious disease, was removed in a serious condition from St. Petersburg to Livadia. The news of him suddenly grew worse and on the 31st of October the Prince and Princess hurried to the Crimea to find their brother-in-law on his death-bed. "I am so glad," the Prince of Wales wrote, "we came out tho' alas too late to find dear Sacha alive. Alix has been the greatest possible comfort to Minnie and I don't know what she would have done without her sister: she is calm, dignified and resigned in her irreparable sorrow. Nicky's devotion, love and tenderness towards her are beyond all praise. A dearer, nicer and simpler boy does not exist, but I do not envy him the terribly responsible and arduous position he is now called upon to fulfil.

"Every day we attend a Service in the Church of the Fortress and the Family mostly twice a day. The funeral is now fixed for the 29th and the wedding probably on the 28th as it must be before the great Russian fast, otherwise it cannot take place till Jan,

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

It is essential that it should take place soon for Nicky's and Alicky's sake and more for the sake of the country, who look upon it as a necessity that their Sovereign should be married. They are the most devoted couple and Alicky acquits herself of a most difficult position admirably."

The Prince was gravely impressed by the solemnity of the funeral ceremony, alike at Moscow and St. Petersburg; the Princess seems to have been more affected by the crowd of kneeling peasants weeping flowing tears.

In the Russian capital they were joined by the Duke of York, and the Russian people, scarcely less than the Emperor's family, were evidently so appreciative of British marks of practical sympathy, that the British Ambassador spontaneously reported to the Foreign Office a very marked improvement in Anglo-Russian relations.

## CHAPTER XIX

TWICE Queen Victoria celebrated her long and glorious tenure of the Throne, and the chronicler has been disposed to assign the wider importance to the jubilee of 1887 when foreign Powers were for the most part represented by the Crowned Heads themselves.<sup>1</sup> Along the route from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey spectators drew the contrast between the gorgeous appearance of the train of princely riders, the scarlet and blue of the uniforms, the gold and burnished steel of the accoutrements, with the little figure dressed in plain black, looking the smaller because, as she always decided to do on great occasions, she sat with no one beside her.

And the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 found the same little figure receiving the almost frenzied acclamations of her people; she was possibly a trifle more bent, but as regal in mien and manner as ever. And this time the black was relieved; a daughter-in-law's tactful and tasteful suggestion had been approved. At the Palace dinner on the evening before the great occasion "the whole front of my dress was embroidered in gold," and on the day itself there were "panels of grey satin" on the black silk, and the bonnet was brightened with "creamy white flowers"

<sup>1</sup>In 1897 the Emperor of Austria proposed to come over himself and head an Escort of Sovereigns, but the dazzling suggestion had to be declined.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

and a white aigrette. So on a beautiful summer's morning, Victoria made a circuit of her Capital, attended by her family and by envoys from foreign countries, and to give the occasion a full Imperial flavour, there was *à la suite* Indian and Colonial officials, Indian native levies, mounted riflemen from Australia, South Africa and Canada, coloured soldiers from the West Coast of Africa, Cyprus, Borneo and Hong Kong. At St. Paul's a short halt was made for an alfresco service of hymns and prayers; there was an idea of moving the statue of Queen Anne to make more room for the *cortège* but the Queen would not hear of it; if she were to dislodge Queen Anne's effigy, posterity could not be blamed if the same liberty were taken with hers. The Royal progress was continued through some of the poorer quarters on the "Surrey side" and across London Bridge, where the Gold Stick was shot over his horse's head, his cuirasse clattering on the pavement with an ugly thud. The Princess of Wales, gowned in her favourite lilac, sat facing the Queen, and would have invited Lord Howe into one of the Royal carriages, but a gallant old officer was determined to remount his charger and retain to the end his proper place "next to the Person of the Sovereign."

The festivities lasted a fortnight; there was a Palace Garden Party when Queen and Princess made a tour of the grounds in a "Victoria," a review in Windsor of the Indian and Colonial troops, a reception and a naval display at Spithead which enabled foreign nations to draw what moral they pleased

## THE JUBILEE DINNER

from a fourfold line of 173 ships mustered in the Solent without withdrawing a single vessel from foreign service.

And Victoria conferred on her eldest son the Grand Mastership of the Order of the Bath, an exalted sinecure which had been vacant for thirty-six years. The Princess was not quite such an expert, as by now she should have been, about Orders and Decorations (the latter word lent itself to some thickening of the r's) but she saw how overjoyed the Prince was and the Queen received the prettiest, and most dutiful, message of thanks.

Through that summer people seemed to keep open house, and perhaps never before were so given to hospitality; the Queen's foreign guests were lavishly entertained and hotels and restaurants did a roaring trade. But while well-to-do folk feasted daily, the Princess of Wales made up her mind that their poorer brothers and sisters should have at least one square meal. Her ideas on the subject were large; she would provide, or cause to be provided, a dinner for 400,000 people, who need have no qualification other than poverty; there was no question of their being "deserving," or very much the reverse, so long as they were really hungry. The plan was so bold and so original that many hard-headed people thought it doomed to failure. "Really the dear Princess had gone a little too far!" But they were quickly undeceived—and their purse-strings loosened—by Sir Thomas Lipton who stepped forward with a cheque for £25,000 in one hand and a simple, but comprehensive, menu, including prices, in the other.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

To this arch caterer the Princess promptly pinned her faith, only taking eager thought in every detail submitted to her; all the large halls in London were engaged and records may be vainly searched to find a parallel for a meal served within the same hour in which 700 tons of food, washed down by unlimited streams of tea and coffee, were consumed by "guests of Royalty" in whose service 10,000 waiters were enlisted.

But the donor of the feast wanted also to be a hostess, and on the morrow of Jubilee Day she made her way to the People's Palace, and to the Central Halls in Holborn and Clerkenwell, and bade her guests a welcome which each and every one, quite justifiably, accepted as personal. But even so she was not content.

The sight of men and women and children satisfying a positive craving for food, stirred a chord in a very human breast, and the fragments which remained from the Jubilee Dinner were gathered up in more senses than one.

Could not something, the Princess asked, be done for this multitude for whom, like the great Teacher Himself, she was moved with pity. Good Sir Thomas—may the earth lie light on his ashes—was once more to the fore with sage advice and solid help. Long and earnest consultations took place at Marlborough House, and at the close of them there issued the Alexandra Trust under which, day in day out, for the outlay of a penny a portion of wholesome food could be obtained, while a few coppers could call a really substantial meal.



(W & D Downey)

WITH EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES

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## TROUBLE IN GREECE

Queen Alexandra must have been the guest of honour at banquets of every sort and size in every capital of Europe; it is possible to think that the only one which remained fixed in her memory was the Jubilee Dinner of 1897.

But through the triumphs, and indeed through the aftermath, of the Diamond Jubilee, the Princess was greatly troubled—and the Prince no less so—by the turn of affairs in Greece; once more they were heart and soul with the rather ineffective Monarch who honestly tried to curb the recklessness of his picturesque, but very perverse, people.

The King of the Hellenes had been a guest at Marlborough House for the Jubilee of 1887, but this year the Queen had decided that no Crowned Head should be invited; the ruling had one great advantage in that the Kaiser, to his considerable annoyance, was thereby ruled out. Anyhow King George's hands were too fully occupied to leave Athens. The Cretans were fretting to be rescued from the Turkish yoke and to be incorporated in the Greek kingdom; the Greeks were "responsive" to the point of rashness, and in mid-February an army, conveyed to the island by Greek ships, challenged the Turkish garrison. The six European Powers stepped in and ordered the Greek soldiers to ground arms; Greece snapped her fingers at the order flourished in her face and went on with the fight. The Powers handsomely forgave the impertinent rebuff, and even secured the consent of the Porte to Cretan autonomy under Turkish suzerainty. Greece, however, scouted these terms

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and braving the threat of the rather puzzled Powers that her port would be blockaded, "went for" Turkey, only—as was a foregone conclusion—to be very roughly handled and compelled at the end of May to sue for peace.

The Princess of Wales begged her husband to use all the resources of his influence, and all his own tact, so that the Powers might be urged to mediate between the combatants and save Greece from the consequences of her foolhardiness.

If only Mr. Gladstone could have helped! He had told the Prince and Princess that "although the devotion of an old man may be of little worth," he was as much at their command for any service he could render them as if he were still an active and responsible Servant of the Crown. But this was three years ago, and Mr. Gladstone was now too old and too tired to be called upon for any effort on behalf of a land he never ceased to love.

But the sympathy of the Prince with his brother-in-law was as quick as it was profound; stimulated by his wife's anxiety, which vividly recalled the far-off days of Denmark's plight, he approached Lord Salisbury again and again to remind him that Greece was practically prostrate at the feet of her sworn and angry foe. His strain was "if only England will lead the way and put her foot down, Greece may yet be extricated from the terrible position in which she is now placed." Lord Salisbury's foot, no light one, was firmly and wisely "put down," just when the last echoes of the Jubilee festivities were dying away, and in July to the intense relief of the Princess

of Wales, he could report that the Sultan had given way and had accepted the principal demands of the six Ambassadors; negotiations were protracted for many months, but in the end Greece was to escape, on fairly easy terms, from Turkey's vengeance.

Throughout the summer and autumn relations between the Kaiser and the Prince and Princess were strained, not for the first or last time, almost to snapping point. The Kaiser protested loudly that his attitude was far more correct than that of the Prince of Wales; his sister, he reminded everybody, was the wife of the Heir to the Greek Throne, but he did not think that fact afforded sufficient grounds for any interference on his part, whereas his British nephew was thrusting in his oar at every point on behalf of a brother-in-law. The respective "attitudes" of the uncle and nephew were characteristic; the watchword of the Prince of Wales no less than of the Princess was to give a hand to the fallen; the motto of the Kaiser, who probably never thought of consulting the Kaiserin on any such point, was *vae victis*.

But the term had by no means been set to what the Prince alluded to as "our grave responsibilities in Crete." As soon as the island had been invested with autonomy, the Powers undertook to choose a Governor-General, and the Tsar, bent on pleasing his mother and Aunt Alix, put forward with considerable emphasis the name of Prince George of Greece who had been his travelling companion around the world.

The Prince and Princess of Wales, having duly sought the advice, and secured the support of Lord

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Salisbury, set themselves to second the Tsar's proposal. At the end of January 1898 the courtly Russian Ambassador, M. de Staal, went down to Sandringham and the matter was thoroughly talked over. The Princess made no disguise of her earnest wish that her nephew, of whom she had seen a great deal, should be entrusted with work for which he seemed well fitted; the Ambassador was scarcely less keen but he put in a reminder that the Sultan's assent had to be obtained, and he dropped a hint that the German Emperor had already induced his Brother of Austria to join him in opposing Prince George's candidature. The Ambassador perhaps knew a little more than he said, for Berlin and Vienna were making play with the insinuation that, as Prince George was the nephew of the Princess of Wales, England was selfishly interested in his nomination. France and Italy, however, had to be reckoned with, and when it was discovered that these two were of the same mind as Russia and England, the Kaiser threw up the sponge and the second son of the King of the Hellenes took up his post, on three years' probation.

For a while superficial peace prevailed in Crete but difficulties soon supervened and Prince George came over to report them to his English relatives and invite their counsel; the advice offered crystallised into a strong recommendation to keep out of anything like party strife, to gain for himself insight into racial characteristics and to administer justice on behalf of rival races and religions without fear or favour.

## DEATH OF QUEEN OF DENMARK

There must have been moments when the Princess would have given much if her brother had pursued a less ambitious but less troublesome road; although she never admitted, or even recognised it, "Willy" represented a constant drain upon her benevolence and a strain on her patience. She must have been, and she was, truly thankful when her youngest brother Waldemar, who had married an Orléans Princess, was passed over for the rickety throne of Bulgaria in favour of the ill-fated Prince Alexander of Battenberg.

It was altogether an uncomfortable autumn and rendered an unhappy one by the sudden death of the Duchess of Teck. The course of years had only served to deepen the affection which the Princess lavished on her Beloved Maria, the cousin who, in virtue of her experience, had often served as mentor and guide, and had more than once smoothed down little rough places, whose loyal friendship could be relied upon as on a rock. A sharper grief was near at hand. "Alix has telegraphed to me that her beloved Mother has passed away. I know what a blow it will be to the poor King and their children who were devoted. I am so thankful dear Alix was with her all the time." So runs a Michaelmas entry in Queen Victoria's diary for 1898; the Queen was too frank to feign any *deuil de cœur*; and she was just now under the glow induced by Kitchener's victory at Omdurman; with comparatively trifling cost of blood and treasure, the Dervish power had been shattered, the Sudan re-occupied, a million square miles brought under

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Anglo-Egyptian rule, and above all—as she felt it—the stain of Gordon's death had been wiped off the British shield. No wonder Victoria was elated.

But she knew the Princess did not exaggerate in writing: "No words can describe my sorrow." And the sorrow may have been lined with the recollection that devoted loyalty, born of unstinted love, to her mother had not always been made easy; the visits of the Queen of Denmark to England had been curiously rare and comparatively brief and the number of times she had crossed the Queen of England's threshold might be counted on the fingers of the hands. Of course no slight to her parents was intended, but the Princess had quietly insisted on spending some slice of every year with them, and had trained her children to pay the full respect which was their due: the new blank in her life was going to be a very real one, and Victoria summoned all her natural motherly kindness in her honest effort to fill it.

## CHAPTER XX

"HER Majesty Queen Alexandra, President of the London Hospital, who always took a personal and sympathetic interest in its work and who in 1900 introduced to England the Finsen light cure for lupus and presented the first lamp to this hospital." Such is the inscription on a statue, of some artistic merit, in the courtyard of the London Hospital, and it is perhaps rather tamely worded. Queen Alexandra not only took a "sympathetic interest" but through fifty years<sup>1</sup> impressed herself pretty deeply on the work of the famous East London institution and, at least on one occasion, benevolently overstepped the narrow line which distinguishes perseverance from pertinacity. "Nothing like perseverance," she reminded the hospital staff when, in 1899, the first Finsen lamp was installed. Professor Finsen was a Dane and the then Princess of Wales was thought to pin rather too much faith on his reputed cure for lupus simply because he was a compatriot. Doctors rather scornfully recorded their disbelief in him and all his ways, medical students shrugged their shoulders in derision, Mr. Sydney Holland roundly spoke of himself as a "doubting Thomas." But the Princess was not to be denied or put off. The victims of this hideous tubercular dis-

<sup>1</sup>In June 1864 she laid the Foundation Stone of the new Alexandra wing.



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figurement had moved her to pity; she learnt that the attempts to remove the growths by caustic thrusts and spoon scrapings had proved futile and all her influence was brought to bear on the hospital which she would allude to as "my own" to give the Danish professor a fair fighting chance. Mentally she registered a vow that if success attended the system here, the Empress Marie should have no rest till it was introduced into Russia. Finally, either to please her, or to prove her wrong, an eminent physician and two nurses were despatched from the London Hospital to Copenhagen to study Finsen's process and make themselves acquainted with the apparatus he employed. Their report was quickly and quite startlingly favourable, and with their return not a moment was lost in forming a special department; Finsen lamps were installed, of which the first was the gift of the Princess, and over it the committee inscribed the words: "Nothing like perseverance." The news of the "lamps of hope" spread like wild fire; from every county of England at first and from every corner of the world, unhappy beings who had shrunk from being seen by their fellows, streamed into "the London" which was wholly unable to cope with the applications. Before a week was out there was a waiting list of two years ahead. In some cases the disease was too far advanced to be arrested but in this twentieth century one hundred patients have been daily treated and each one is rightly reminded to whom is directly and unquestionably due the institution in London of the now world-famous cure.

## THE LONDON HOSPITAL

But to the London Hospital on a December day in 1886 there had been brought a far more fearful specimen of tortured humanity. John Merrick, a victim of the most extravagant form of elephantiasis, had been hawked and harried about England and the Continent until the "exhibition" was banned, and the last showman, finding his "exhibit" a burden, put him on a boat for London Docks and left him to his fate. But two years earlier an already famous surgeon had examined the Elephant Man to report on his hideous abnormalities, and so in the pocket of a half-starved outcast, huddled up in a corner of the Liverpool Street waiting-room, there was found a card with "Sir Frederick Treves" inscribed on it. A message was sent to the hospital, and within an hour a human being, who was a monster in appearance though gentle as a lamb to deal with, found the first home he could remember, and for the first time in his life was to be recognised as a fellow creature. But staff and attendants could with difficulty refrain from expressions of disgust at his appearance, and women who caught sight of him were positively scared; a nurse who brought a tray to his bedside dropped it at the mere sight and fled from the room. The pitiful story reached the Princess of Wales who was insistent on being kept abreast with the happenings at "the London;" within a few days the Elephant Man had for a visitor a Princess, and the Princess came to him with a smile on her lips and a look of welcome in her eyes; she shook his hand, sat by his side and talked to him as if he were someone she was quite unaffectedly glad to see. The

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Princess paid Merrick many visits, sent him Christmas cards and, to his almost delirious, but inarticulate joy, there arrived a signed photograph of herself. He cried over it, regarded it as a sacred object, and would scarcely allow anyone to touch it; he was told to write a letter of thanks, and the few lines beginning: "My dear Princess" and ending "Yours sincerely" may have been unorthodox in text but they breathed a spirit of simple courage and quiet resignation which went straight to the heart of the recipient who had realised a little quicker than anyone else that Merrick's hopeless longing was "to be like other people."

And if the London Hospital was to absorb much thought, and a good deal of time, it was also to be the *point d'appui* for an emprise of large, and lasting, importance.

## CHAPTER XXI

ON the 11th of October, 1899, Mr. Kruger—chuckling over the surprises he proposed to spring on his opponents—issued an insulting ultimatum and within two days Great Britain and South Africa were at war. The Princess had not followed her husband's impetuosity in the summer when he dubbed the Colonial Secretary's South African policy as "somewhat ambiguous," nor did she express any satisfaction when she was told that Mr. Chamberlain had so "quickened his pace" as to render war inevitable. She had little knowledge of the grievances alleged by the Uitlanders of the Transvaal and cared nothing for the interests of the diamond dealers in Kimberley, but she was sure that in a long-drawn-out campaign—as she was told this would be—sickness and suffering must stalk among the soldiers, and she wanted to do what she could to help them.

From end to end of the struggle she busied herself with every useful movement for the wives and widows and children of the soldiers, but there at once occurred to her the idea of a hospital ship, and to Lord Wantage and Mr. Sydney Holland<sup>1</sup> she first confided her scheme; to these fairly hard-headed men her suggestion seemed as sound as it was simple, but for some reason it was not at first smiled on from the seats of authority. But the Princess was nothing

<sup>1</sup>President of the London Hospital; succeeded his father as 2nd Baron Knutsford in 1914.

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daunted by this, rather the reverse; she had only to remind herself and her "backers" that "there is nothing like perseverance," to be sure of achieving her object. As regards money there was little difficulty; gifts, in cash and kind, poured in on her, and Sir Thomas Lipton's first cheque ran into three figures; unquestionably some of the donations smacked of self-advertisement, social or commercial, but so long as their genuine utility was not in doubt, she would refuse none of them. The suggestion was also made at the time that, with some of the money in hand, dockers' houses should be bought for erection in South Africa; the Princess entertained the proposal favourably but "nothing," she stoutly declared, "will induce me to get them from Germany." Then she thought that a chaplain should be attached to the hospital ship, and was dissatisfied both with the protest that he would take up too much room and with the assurance that the Captain would "read prayers." She yielded the point with reluctance and remained fast in her belief that when an ordained minister is available for the Divine office, the substitution of a layman is largely undesirable.

The German Emperor arrived just now at Windsor and the Princess wrote a little fretfully about her time being so taken up with his visit; she wanted to get on with the ship, and she was so determined to arouse the Prince's interest in it, that she made him take a day off and go with her to Tilbury Docks to inspect the vessel.

Both were delighted with all the prudent provision for the patients, greatly impressed by the well-

## *SOUTH AFRICA*

thought-out medical arrangements, and very pleased with the nurses, though the Princess admitted, with a little pout, that she would have preferred to have chosen her own; there was consolation in the thought that they "could be changed later on." Everything seemed satisfactory except the boiler which fitfully refused to function and was finally condemned at Capetown. The Princess reminded herself, and others, that she had had no little experience of the sea and was not wholly ignorant of the management of ships, that she numbered among her friends many distinguished sailors, such as Hedworth Lambton<sup>1</sup> and Colin Keppel,<sup>2</sup> and that she had often heard them discuss nautical matters. But the boiler was a little beyond her and she could only lament its misconduct and, after one false start, insist that it should be thoroughly overhauled before getting up steam again. Then Lord Wolseley was asked to snatch a few minutes from the War Office and come to see her, and the Commander-in-Chief quickly agreed that there were far too few nurses in South Africa, and that as a start twelve more of her own and Mr. Holland's choosing should go overseas as soon as possible.<sup>3</sup>

The London Hospital was carefully combed for the first batch of nurses, and among them were two des-

<sup>1</sup>Admiral the Hon. Sir Hedworth Lambton, whose contingent made itself felt at Ladysmith.

<sup>2</sup>Admiral Sir Colin Keppel. Later a close friendship was formed with Lord Fisher, whose solecism in asking the Queen to dance at a State ball was at once forgiven.

<sup>3</sup>At the outbreak of the South African War the "nursing staff" consisted of a Lady Superintendent, nineteen Superintendent Sisters and sixty-eight Sisters. Before the end of the campaign

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tined to become Matrons-in-Chief of the Nursing Service; "of course," the Princess stipulated, "they shall wear my badges and be called my Army Nurses with the same capes and dress as the others." The question arose—but as to this she was airily indifferent—whether the War Office or her fund should bear the expense; she was very anxious "not to embarrass the Government," and finally footed the bill herself and came down to the Docks to bid Godspeed to the twelve nurses.

The nurses met with an eager welcome and won golden opinions everywhere except in one quarter; a jaundiced report of their capabilities was sent home by a highly prejudiced individual and reached official ears. The Princess for once was really angry; "we will not leave a stone unturned till we have set matters right," she assured the hospital authorities; a telegram was despatched begging that an inquiry should be held, and Lord Kitchener promptly sent word that as a result the work and worth of the nurses was entirely established and Miss —— had been sharply rapped over the knuckles for spreading a false story.

The twelve London Hospital nurses, although they little thought it, were to be the foundation stones of no mean edifice, for within a month of her accession, Queen Alexandra was to exercise her newly acquired authority in inviting Mr. Holland to draw up a scheme for Army Nursing, and in securing for it the

there were twenty-eight General Hospitals of 250 beds as well as several private hospitals; the Army Nursing Service had to be recruited from various sources, Princess Christian's admirable Army Nursing Service making a large contribution.

## THE NURSES

sanction and support of the Secretary of State.<sup>1</sup> With some prevision, she suggested that Mr. Treves should be the consulting surgeon. The reports which had reached her of insufficient nursing arrangements for the sick and wounded in South Africa were, no doubt, highly exaggerated, but there was good evidence that much might be healthily done which had been unhappily left undone in this respect. The siege of the Laager at Paardeburg of itself had resulted in a fearful outbreak of epidemic fever, and altogether the preponderance of sick over wounded in the struggle against the Boer patriots was the precise converse of what occurred in the war against the Central Powers when medical and surgical arrangements went near to perfection. The Queen threw herself with ardour into the plan which was unfolded to her; she was shrewd with suggestion and eager to stimulate, but she never interfered in matters of purely technical detail. There came to Marlborough House on a summer afternoon in 1901, a bevy of eager and efficient nurses, and Queen Alexandra gave them a little address; Mr. Holland had prepared a "suitable" allocution and offered to read it for her, to be met with: "Not a bit of it, my speech, and I will speak it myself." And "my speech" was certainly more effective and gave more pleasure to her guests than any flow of masculine oratory. Lord Roberts, the new Commander-in-Chief, was now approached and showed himself most sympathetic; this was very opportune for at that

<sup>1</sup>Hon. St. John Brodrick; raised in the Peerage as Earl of Midleton, 1920.



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moment "Bobs" was likely to have things done pretty much as he wanted. Finally, and as the result of a vast deal of work, the nursing of the Army was re-organised, and put under a Nursing Board of which Queen Alexandra was President with the right to nominate two members. She chose Lady Downe and Mr. Holland, and *The Times* newspaper said that a better selection could not have been made, nor was anyone ungracious enough to suggest the anomaly of the Queen Consort having the power to elect the members of a Board which controlled State servants, such members being really responsible to no one but her. Lady Roberts was also nominated to the Board and made a *prima facie* objection to the inclusion of Mr. Holland. Her letter had been private but its contents were known to Mr. Holland who was a little nervous lest the Queen should think he had "given himself away" in the course of a conversation with the wife of the Commander-in-Chief. "You need not worry yourself," the Queen told him, "I have this instant received a letter from Lady R. who now suggests my asking you to come on, as the only objection before was having two people from the same hospital on the Board. You know how much I should like it, but if you feel you would rather not, I will certainly not press you, knowing how busy you are." There were of course the usual hitches and hold-ups, but a month before the peace was signed at Vereeniging a magniloquent Army Order announced that there had been formed the Queen Alexandra Imperial Nursing Service with the Queen as President and, at her inspired suggestion, with

MR. HALDANE

*sub cruce candida* as its motto; its first establishment was to consist of a Matron-in-Chief at the War Office, two Principal Matrons, and a staff of about 300 Matrons and Sisters, capable of expansion as conditions might dictate.

The Q.A.I.M.N.S. was now a permanent institution, to have later on as an adjunct an establishment no less cumbrous in title and scarcely less valuable in service; the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, with special duties in the Military Families Hospitals. The maximum of nurses for the Q.A.I.M.N.S. was fixed at 649, a figure then considered rather high which varied little for a dozen years when it was destined to be multiplied many times over.<sup>1</sup> There remained one matter with which the Queen was dissatisfied but as to which she was obliged to temper perseverance with patience. In 1903, however, Mr. Balfour's Government tottered to its fall, and the Portfolio for War fell to the hands of Mr. Haldane. The new Secretary of State was scarcely in his seat when on a Sunday afternoon he was summoned to Buckingham Palace, not knowing what was required of him; the same evening the Queen could tell Mr. Holland she "had made a *coup d'état* and taken the bull by the horns by seeing Mr. Haldane to-day." Mr. Haldane was "very nice," listened to "everything I could tell him about our Military Nurses' Homes," asked Mr. Holland for further information, and finally, among his many salutary measures, saw to it that the better quarters which had been refused by his predecessors should be granted

<sup>1</sup> 11,000 Nurses were engaged in the Great War.

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to the nurses for whom Queen Alexandra felt, and held herself, responsible. Once more she could, and did, say "nothing like perseverance." And Queen Alexandra still held herself responsible when 11,000 women crossed the seas to fulfil a skilled work of mercy which won the grateful affection of their patients, and provoked—as these were forward to admit—the almost startled admiration of our Allies. She marked with eager satisfaction all the efforts of "my nurses" as she justly called them; in the first winter of the War she sent to each one a fur cape and a pair of warm gloves, she received hundreds of them at Marlborough House, and she left nothing undone that could be done to promote their comfort and add to their value in the field.

In the full story of a desperate trial of strength, there will be no brighter page than the one which depicts a band of faithful women called into being by a Woman's persistent solicitude for sick and wounded soldiers, and with whose work that Woman's name will be imperishably linked.

The sun of Queen Victoria's reign was to set under clouds which at moments were black with menace; no reverse or disappointment in the weary Boer warfare was sufficient to damp her spirit or daunt her courage, but the strain told upon her health and before the Court moved from Windsor to Osborne at the end of 1900 it was certain that a life very precious to the country was ebbing out. On the 2nd of January, 1901, she conferred an earldom and the Garter on Lord Roberts; it was the last honour she

## THE DEATH OF THE QUEEN

would bestow, and within three weeks the last inquiry she would make was on behalf of Lord Kitchener who had succeeded to the Chief Command in South Africa. Her children were hurriedly summoned to her bedside on the 19th of January and three days later a great Sovereign laid down the sceptre which she had wielded longer and better than any of her predecessors, and sank quietly to rest.

The Princess of Wales hurried by special trains from Sandringham to Osborne to take her share in the last vigil, and was close to the Queen's pillow when the end came; she may well have resented the German Emperor's theatrical, and not very welcome, entry into the death chamber, but what mattered most was that with her last breath there fluttered to the Queen's lips the name of her eldest son.

Perhaps no two women of that period contrasted more sharply in character, outlook and method than Queen Victoria and her eldest daughter-in-law. Statecraft was an open book to the Queen; it was a volume which had little interest for the Princess unless the welfare of her children and relatives was involved. Her sorrows, and they were many, could never quench the *joie de vivre* which bubbled up to the end; Queen Victoria, over a long-drawn-out period, would say with Queen Constance: "Here I and sorrow sit." Queen Victoria's biographer insists that she was prone to offer advice but indisposed to receive any; advice was one of the few things which the Princess was disinclined to bestow, but she often sought it and from no one more often and more happily than from her mother-in-law. The careful

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reader of Queen Victoria's published letters will find in them her sympathy with sound charitable schemes rather than any quick appreciation of the poverty and misery which in the last century were stalking abroad; the Princess of Wales was determined to get in touch with the poverty-stricken and sufferers themselves; organised good works were in the mind of the elder woman, personal service in the heart of the younger. It was admittedly difficult to amuse the Queen, whose sense of humour was by no means acute; the Princess of Wales revelled in talk which rippled with innocent laughter. The Queen nourished a latent dislike for Denmark; the Princess never sought to disguise her distrust of Germany. Their divergence of views suffered little change in the flux of time, but loyalty of purpose was so ingrained in both characters that mutual trust and whole-hearted affection for one another grew stronger with every successive year, and the "invariable kindness" of which the Princess wrote in 1878 was so sustained that not the slightest breeze ever ruffled their relations, no word other than gentle can be traced in their thoughts, and the death of Queen Victoria came to the Princess, on her own admission, as the loss of a second mother.

The funeral of Queen Victoria, the simple procession from Osborne to East Cowes with the Kaiser and the new King and Queen following on foot, the passage of the Royal yacht across the Solent on a sunny February afternoon, the military progress along the streets of London through lanes of genuine mourners, the retinue of Crowned Heads and Princes

## THE NEW ORDER

of the Blood, the religious ceremony in St. George's Chapel, the quiet committal to the tomb at Frogmore, where Queen Alexandra led by the hand the little Prince of Wales, go to make an occasion on which the historian will do well to pause, if only to emphasise the magnitude of an unforgettable reign.

The prescribed periods of Court and Family mourning were rigidly observed, but when a term was finally set to them, it was quickly seen that an entirely new social order had set in.

Since the demise of the Prince Consort the Court had been coloured in very sombre tones. Queen Victoria had discontinued anything like residence in the capital for which she had never evinced any liking. No entertainment outside her own demesne had been graced by her presence, and scarcely a dozen persons could claim the honour of having received her as a guest. State balls and concerts, for which no expense was spared, had been given annually, by the Queen's command, at Buckingham Palace, but within the walls of Windsor Castle no sound of revelry had been heard. At Osborne and Balmoral domesticity had been the dominant note; the Queen had visited neither opera house nor theatre, and an oratorio at the Albert Hall had been her only taste of gaiety in public. King Edward and Queen Alexandra quickly made it known that they were determined to dissipate this tradition of gloom: colour, movement and brightness appealed equally to both of them and both agreed to bring a sense of enjoyment to bear on the ceremonies, no less than

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on the recreations which their position would now entail on them.

Buckingham Palace, with its sadly out-of-date arrangements, its deserted rooms, its discoloured imitation marble walls, had sunk to such dismality as to justify the King's nickname of "The Sepulchre." Now, renovated, reorganised and, under its new mistress's supervision, redecorated, it would become the pulsating centre of the capital. Windsor Castle, too, was to be thoroughly "done up," and parties for Ascot Races would be entertained there instead of, as heretofore, in hired houses in the neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup> The Sovereign, with his Consort, would renew the practice of opening Parliament in person, would convene Chapters of the Garter and lead processions of the Knights to St. George's Chapel. The Monarchs of Europe would successively be received in the Royal palaces and lend their presence to Guildhall banquets. Drawing-rooms by dim daylight would give place to evening receptions blazing with light and luxurious with hospitality; at Edinburgh and Dublin King and Queen would hold their Courts; the Waterloo Gallery was to be the scene of a ball unrivalled perhaps in beauty; Investitures would once more be clothed with full circumstance, public buildings would be opened in State and public institutions inspected with ceremony.

Despite her aloofness from Society—an odious word for which there is no substitute—Queen Victoria exercised a very direct and real control

<sup>1</sup>Queen Victoria was understood to have offered the Castle to her son for the race week with the prohibitive proviso that the guests should be of her choosing.

## EXPENDITURE

over it, and, so far from being relaxed, it would now be strengthened simply because the King and Queen's personal acquaintance was so large. Queen Victoria rarely crossed the threshold of a private house; the new King and Queen would still allow themselves to be the guests at many private houses and to be where they were—or anyhow not to be debarred from going where they went, would be a main object of social ambition. But from the first the King let it be known that if anyone chose to bid to their entertainments persons on whose fair fame there was a public blot, they could not look to him—and even less to Queen Alexandra—to honour their houses again.

Such was the bold and vivid programme and it would involve cost as well as labour. Little difficulty, however, was incurred in setting up figures which should be adequate for the King's generous, but carefully calculated, views as to how "things should be done;" the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to raise the Royal income to £470,000 and to swell Queen Alexandra's contingent annuity to £60,000; the proposal was coupled to suitable provision for the Princess of Wales and the three Princesses, while the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall were to be supplemented by a yearly grant of £40,000.

An "investigating" committee of twenty-three proceeded to overhaul the Royal Household arrangements which stood in sore need of the process, and then, with the sole exception of Mr. Labouchère, voted for the Chancellor's figures. In Parliament, however, Queen Alexandra found an unexpected champion in the person of Mr. Keir Hardie. The



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chivalrous Labour Member moved to fix her income at £50,000 and reluctantly withdrew his Amendment when assured that his illustrious protégée was quite satisfied with the £33,000 allotted to her from the joint Privy Purses, out of which she would contribute annually £1,000 to the Department of the Master of the Horse, who would then defray her expenses for special trains, motor cars and horses. The Queen, of course, paid the salaries of her own Household, and an already fairly large suite was augmented by Lord Gosford and Lord de Grey as Vice-Chamberlain and Treasurer, the Duchess of Buccleugh as Mistress of the Robes, with three more Ladies of the Bedchamber, one more "Woman of the Bedchamber," and four Maids of Honour.<sup>1</sup> The well-requited duties of these ladies, when the Court was in London, were "trying" rather than arduous; the lady actually "in waiting," and a Maid of Honour might well remain at the Palace during the afternoon, very often to find at the end of it that their services were not required until the evening when they might attend their Mistress to dinner-party, opera or theatre. The correspondence, as copious as it was complicated, fell almost entirely to the Private Secretary and Miss Knollys—now raised to the rank of a Peer's daughter—who would think nothing of writing sixty letters or more in a day.

<sup>1</sup>The Countess of Antrim, the Countess of Gosford, the Countess of Lytton, Lady Alice Stanley.

Almost the first telegram Queen Alexandra despatched was to Lady Antrim begging her to continue the services she had long rendered to Queen Victoria.

One Maid of Honour, the Hon. Dorothy Vivian, was married in 1901 in Buckingham Palace Chapel to Sir Douglas Haig.

## CHAPTER XXII

QUEEN VICTORIA had broken with tradition by frequently absenting herself from the Opening of Parliament, a Royal breach with custom for which Mr. Gladstone had more than once humbly reproached her. She told Lord Russell that it was always a ceremony which even in her happiest days she dreaded more than any other and the last time she nerved herself for the effort was in 1886, and this as a special favour to Lord Beaconsfield. King Edward decided that the old practice should be resumed and in full state, and moreover he would do what the Queen had not done since 1861, and with his own lips read the "Speech" to the Members of the two Chambers.

Then two days before the 14th of February, the day fixed for the Opening, he convened a Special Chapter of the Garter to fulfil a purpose he had long had in mind. To Edward VII was due the revival, in favour of his peerless Consort, of a custom instituted by Richard I, but which had fallen into disuse since Henry VII, "Gartered"<sup>1</sup> his mother. Charles I, most chivalrous of monarchs, was preparing to confer on Henrietta Maria the status of a Dame of the Garter and explicit Royal orders had been issued

<sup>1</sup>In the 14th and 15th centuries Queens Consort and other exalted women were designated *Dames de la Fraternité de Saint Georges*.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

to that effect when there broke out the revolt which culminated in rebellion and regicide. It remained therefore for Queen Alexandra—and subsequently Queen Mary—to enhance dignity of appearance and gorgeousness of apparel with the blue sash slung across the shoulder.

So when at two o'clock on a winter's afternoon the lights in the House of Lords went up, the Queen was seen standing beside the King clad in the deep black and Marie Stuart coif which perhaps became her better than any other garb, ropes of pearls falling to her knees, and her robe slashed with the Supreme Order of Chivalry. Here was a vision of beauty, and apparently of still youthful beauty, to be engraved in the memory of any witness of the occasion. The Queen, as usual, was wholly unconscious of the admiration she excited, the scene was of course unfamiliar to her, she wanted to "make out" her friends, and her attention was pleasantly directed to the M.P.'s who, in their eagerness to secure standing room in the Royal presence, were hustling and jostling one another with cries of "Don't push," in a manner highly suggestive of a Soccer scrum.

And that afternoon Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a Prime Minister in the making, made in the House of Commons dutiful reference to Queen Alexandra; this gave special satisfaction to the King who was determined to give his Consort in every way possible the nearest approach to Sovereign status. For instance it was suggested that when he was out of town, the full King's Guard at Whitehall might be reduced; he peremptorily ordered that the Guard



(W & D Doran)

AT THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT, 1901

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## THE HOUSE OF LORDS

should remain at the same strength while the Queen was in residence, and that a "Travelling Escort" for her should be the same as for himself. He would have liked to have coupled her name with his own in the Collect but realised that this would be liturgically incorrect; he insisted that her wishes must be taken before any Court arrangement should be made, and woe betide an equerry if he were to draw up any programme without consulting Queen Alexandra's convenience and securing her consent. The consent was always readily given, although when the time came round it might well be found that she herself was "not quite ready."

The King and Queen were at Cowes when there came the not-unexpected telegram announcing the death of the Empress Frederick. "My beloved and gifted sister is a great loss to me," the King wrote to a friend, "but her sufferings were so great one could not wish her life to be prolonged." The Queen had never allowed anything to cloud her very real affection for her sister-in-law, and open-hearted correspondence had been regular between them; she had no hesitation about accompanying the King on his hurried journey to be present at the funeral ceremony at Potsdam where the Empress Frederick had desired to be laid beside her husband in the *Fredenkirch* mausoleum. The Kaiser seemed really grateful to his aunt for paying this tribute to his mother, and all would have been well if only he had not irritated

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

his uncle by making of the occasion an opportunity for a grand display of arms; the King did not really require 15,000 men to march past him immediately after a religious service in order to be convinced of Germany's military efficiency.

From Berlin the Queen travelled to Copenhagen to find one of the family gatherings which as usual included the Russian Imperial family; the King came on there from Homburg and quickly blew to the winds the silly story that he had been annoyed with the Tsar for contemplating a visit to France before offering to pay his respects to the British Sovereign. The Queen had always hoped that Copenhagen would mark the first of a series of visits to the Courts of Europe which the King was already planning, all of which were to be void of political intentions though the Kaiser's advisers were apt to read into them some sinister diplomatic purpose. It was altogether a very happy party, and those who remembered, said that Queen Alexandra was no less simple and no less lovable than when, as a little girl in the *Gule Pala*, she pleaded in vain for a new white muslin frock.

Christmas this year marked an exception to an otherwise unvaried rule and was spent in London instead of in Norfolk. "A slight indisposition which prevents the Queen from travelling," was the explanation proffered to the public, and this was fortified by the fact that the Queen declined to allow Miss Knollys, who was seriously unwell, to be under any other care than her own.

The dictionary definition of a secretary is "one

### *CHARLOTTE KNOLLYS*

who is entrusted with secret matters;" a great many women can keep a secret with entire fidelity, but Charlotte Knollys was one of the few women who, knowing everything, appeared to know nothing which lies outside public knowledge; in other words, she was, at all times and in all circumstances, blandly, but wholly, unpumpable. For close on sixty years—and often for close on sixteen hours a day—she spared nothing and reserved nothing in her devotion to a mistress who made no light claim on her services, and she found her reward less in spoken words of thanks than in the unstinted affection and unlimited trust which she knew rested with her.



## CHAPTER XXIII

AFTER consulting the Queen as to whether the 26th of June would suit herself, and her relations whom she wished to be present, the King fixed on that day for their crowning. Above all, both were anxious to be crowned in peace, and on Sunday, May 31st, the longed-for telegram was to hand, and it was known that a peace which should impose the easiest possible terms on the South African patriots, had been signed at Vereeniging.

Thereafter arrangements proceeded as if by oiled clockwork, and all seemed to be entirely auspicious. As regards the special part which the Queen Consort would play on the occasion—her dress, her jewels, her attendants—the help of Aunt Augusta was invoked, just as it had been forty years earlier. The octogenarian Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg knew all that had happened, not only when Queen Victoria but when Queen Adelaide was crowned, and, among other reminiscences, she could remind her cousin that in 1831 the Queen Consort walked under a canopy carried by three Duchesses and a Marchioness;<sup>1</sup> Queen Alexandra could do better and enlist the

<sup>1</sup>The draft ceremonial submitted to the King by the Earl Marshall on 5th September, 1831, reads: "The Queen will then kneel down, and four Duchesses, appointed for that Service, holding a rich Pall of Silk or Cloth of Gold over Her Majesty, the Archbishop will pour the Consecrated Oil upon her head, saying: 'In the Name of the Father,' etc." His Majesty, upon being shown this

## MAIDS OF ALL WORK

Duchesses of Portland, Sutherland, Montrose and Marlborough for the service.

The Queen wanted as many women as possible besides herself to benefit by the Coronation, so it was given out to the Press how much the Queen hoped that all ladies attending the ceremony would wear gowns of British manufacture and embroidered by British workwomen. Then she was told that no class of women was more put upon and had more to put up with than maids of all work. She consulted the Bishop of London, handed him a fat cheque, and told him she would like to give a tea party to 10,000 of these workers. The Bishop responded enthusiastically, promised that 1,000 girls should come to his own garden at Fulham where Chapel Royal choir boys would sing to them, secured the assistance of three "Girls' Associations"—the Queen insisting there should be nothing denominational in the affair—and finally 10,000 maids of all work sat down to tea and found beside their plates a brooch surmounted with a crown and the Royal Arms and on the reverse side an inscription "From the Queen."

And later when the echoes of the Coronation had died away, she thought of the "poor wives" who had suffered in the war; something must be done to show them they were not forgotten. So two days after Christmas, in the building of the Alexandra Trust, some 1,500 war widows and children were the guests of Queen Alexandra for their Christmas

draft ceremonial, observed "that there is some difficulty in finding the four Duchesses who are to support the Pall over the Queen during the Anointing"; this no doubt accounts for the one Duchess being replaced by the Marchioness of Lansdowne.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

dinner. For each child there was a box of chocolates and a toy; each widow—besides a voucher for railway expenses—found on her plate a souvenir card with the words: "In bidding you hearty welcome to the Christmas dinner Queen Alexandra desires to express to you her heartfelt sympathy and, with God's blessing, may comfort and happiness be yours in the coming year."

The entrance of the blazing plum pudding was preceded by two pipers of the Scots Guards, and there followed an entertainment by "All-Star" artists, headed by the incomparable Vesta Tilley. Nothing was left to be desired except that the Queen herself was confined to her room with a cold and could only send a message, but a message couched in such womanly words that handkerchiefs were in requisition and eyes were furtively dabbed with them.

Meanwhile for the great event some of the Royal guests were beginning to arrive (Crowned Heads were not invited but the Kaiser was the only Sovereign who would not allow his eldest son to represent him), and scarlet stands were being "run up" all along the route from Buckingham Palace to the Abbey when, on the 15th of June, it was noised that the King had caught a chill the previous evening while attending a Military Tattoo at Aldershot; anyhow the next day it was public property that the Queen had taken his place and had taken the salute from some 31,000 troops while he went quietly by car to Windsor. On two days the Queen drove rather sadly to Ascot in Ascot state, the King remaining in

## ILLNESS OF KING EDWARD

the Castle with M. de Soveral to keep him company. At the end of the week the King received Lord Kitchener's despatches at the hands of Colonel Hamilton, and determined, despite the advice of his doctors, that on the twenty-fifth he would adhere to programme and drive under escort from Paddington to the Palace. But by this time he was enduring intense pain, and an examination showed him to be suffering from an acute form of appendicitis which rendered an operation immediately necessary with a consequent postponement of the Coronation.

The operation was no light one and doctors were a little apprehensive as to the result; the King, as usual entirely free from fear, said, as he walked to the operating-table, that he was sure he would be all right, nor was the Queen any whit less confident. The operating surgeon was Sir Frederick Treves, the nurse in charge was Miss Haines; both hailed from the London Hospital so, in God's good hands, all would surely go well.

It was soon evident that the King had reserves of strength unsuspected even by his personal physicians and within a fortnight he was "out of danger." As soon as convalescence was established he travelled with the Queen to Cowes, and on board the Royal yacht received the Boer General, courtesy and tact once again easing a difficult situation. The breezes of the Solent proved so effective that by the 6th of August complete recovery could be pronounced and the Sovereign returned to London to face the fatigues of the ceremony now due to take place on the 9th of August.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Except for the non-return of many of the distinguished guests who, six weeks ago, had reluctantly packed up and gone away, the great ceremony suffered little from postponement and was superb in circumstance and smooth in every detail. The rehearsals had been conducted under the control of the Earl Marshal, and the ladies and gentlemen who formed his troupe found in the Duke of Norfolk a kindly producer but one who expected them, whatever their rank, to play their parts in all seriousness, and placed them in their positions by well-drilled movements.

The anointing and crowning of the Queen followed that of the King, and as the Crown was placed by the Archbishop of York on her brow, all the Peeresses lifted their coronets from their laps and placed them by a well-drilled, simultaneous movement on their heads; the white-gloved arms made a sort of frame to feminine faces, and the chronicler seemed disposed to think this to be one of the most striking moments in an hour of surpassing magnificence. History had of course been drawn upon by Dry-as-Dusts for precedents as to ritual and procedure, but on one point opinion was eventually unanimous; no such vision of queenly beauty had ever before been seen in the Abbey Church of Westminster. Memory also has its special delights and for every one of the vast congregation gathered on that 9th of August within the old grey walls, one of those delights would surely be the recollection of Alexandra, vested with the Sceptre and Ivory Rod, the emblems of her dignity, making her deep obeisance to her Sovereign Lord,



(H. & D. Dotoney)

# THE CORONATION

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## THE KAISER AT SANDRINGHAM

gorgeous in his kingly clothing, as she passed him on her way to her own Throne.

After the fatigues incidental to the great day a cruise along the west coast of Scotland was prescribed before settling down at Balmoral whence the King could write that although he still felt easily tired, the yachting had done him "great lots of good" and he was having "good sport with the deer."

The Kaiser very gracefully invited Lord Roberts and a party from the War Office to attend German manœuvres and had shown them every attention. And he had also shown great self-restraint, and some regard for British susceptibilities, in declining to give an audience to the Boer generals. So the King thought that—if the Queen did not very much mind—it would be a good move to ask him to Sandringham for the birthday party. In sending the invitation the King promised to show his nephew good sport with the partridges and to teach him bridge, a game which had not yet made its way to Potsdam; he would ask, among others, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour to meet him, only would the Kaiser be so good as not to travel to Norfolk in uniform, and would he bring as small a suite as possible, and above all, no one who wanted to shoot. The King evidently thought these might be dangerous sportsmen, and although Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain would not be among the guns, it would be very awkward if Lord Roberts or Lord Lansdowne got peppered by a German Baron.

And William came and, except that he put one or two people to rights and told the King that he was



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

using the wrong patrol for his motor cars, he was on his best behaviour; he applauded Kubelik loudly and was really pleased when a surprise was sprung on him in the form of Sir Henry Irving, who arrived post haste from Belfast to play the story of "Waterloo;" the Kaiser could tell Sir Henry one or two things about Blücher, and he of course knew rather more about Dr. Johnson than Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bouchier who played a short piece bearing that sage's name.

And so when he went off to stay with Lord Lonsdale, and the King and Queen—the latter for once was admittedly "dead tired"—said to one another: "Thank God he has gone," they had to admit that their nephew had made no departure from perfect correctitude in his conduct, and they could go off with light hearts to Windsor, there to receive the King and Queen of Portugal; it was always understood that the first State visit should be from Carlos and dear Amélie.

## CHAPTER XXIV

KING EDWARD had always nourished the notion, which soon after his accession he submitted to the Prime Minister, that the Heir to the Throne might with advantage fill the position of Viceroy of Ireland. But he had reckoned without the cost. Lord Salisbury, reinforced at other points by Mr. Lecky, the Irish historian, poured cold water on the proposal with the reminder that the Sovereign's representative in the island must disburse at least £15,000 a year in excess of his official income. Baulked of this idea the King was determined that at the earliest possible moment he would cross the Irish Channel and, being told that the two requirements of the people were education and security for their land, he announced he would arrive with an Education Bill in one hand and a Land Bill in the other.

Circumstances conspired to prevent the King from putting his decision into effect until the summer of 1903, and meanwhile Lord Cadogan had given place, as Viceroy, to Lord Dudley, for whom the prospect of spending a few, or many, thousands annually had no immediate terrors.

By a happy accident the arrival of the King and Queen at Kingstown on the 21st of July synchronised with the passage of the Irish Land Bill, an enactment which the Queen was assured would please and pacify

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

the Irish people; the churlish refusal of the Dublin Corporation to give an Address of welcome did nothing to depress her, the cheers which resounded from every window and house top throughout the eleven mile drive to Dublin were the more delightful because she had begged that the pace of the procession should be slow. A few officials might fuss at being kept waiting at the other end, but meanwhile the "poor people" would enjoy the glare and glitter of the Royal Procession and would "really see" the King. Queen Victoria, so it always seemed, had too long postponed her direct appeal to Irish loyalty; her belated "How I delight in the Irish" had something of pathos, if not of self-reproach, in it. The King was "so right" to come quickly among his Irish people, to mix with them freely, and to tell them he would come again, and the Queen Consort was there to help him at every point. Why, at Osborne once, Mr. Gladstone had told the Princess of Wales that he believed her to be something of a Home Ruler, and she had not been at pains to deny the impeachment.

Throughout the visit everything went even better than to plan. In St. Patrick's Hall on the 22nd, eighty-two deputations were received and were supposed to present Addresses, but the latter part of the business many of the spokesmen forgot; they shook hands with the King, walked off with the Addresses under their arms, and had to be recalled for the documents to be recovered. This was a huge joke for both the King and Queen, and special nods and smiles were given to the delinquents. "Hand me the

## IN IRELAND

Address, it's all right," the King whispered with a delightful bow to each culprit, while Queen Alexandra's nods and smiles made them feel they had done quite the right thing.

On the way to and from Trinity College the crowds all along the road rose to a perfect frenzy of enthusiasm; every woman in Dublin with a baby was there to jump it up and down so that the occupants of the Royal carriage should not miss it, ragged urchins shrieked at the tops of their shrill voices, the roughs raised their caps and gave rousing shouts, the well-to-do shopkeepers were little less clamorous. "The poorer they are the more they seem to cheer," the Queen murmured with tears streaming from her eyes.

On the return to the Viceregal the polo match was just over but the Queen who was not as a rule particularly addicted to polo, begged for ten minutes more that she might see the players.

At the Castle a Court was held; "the Queen's Garter ribbon," wrote George Wyndham, "brought out the blue of her eyes. Her purple train was hung from her shoulder by great jewels of dropping pearls, she had a high open lacework collar, a 'breastplate' of diamonds, and ropes of round pearls falling to her lap; *and* she is an Angel."

The visit to Maynooth, where the young priests proudly pointed to a portrait of Persimmon, was preceded by a tour of Dublin's more squalid slums. Here again all was jollity and cheers; the hurrahs of the tattered submerged and especially of the bare-legged children were music in the Queen's ears, and

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

she shook with laughter when a nosegay of cottage flowers, tied up to the consistence of a cabbage, was playfully aimed at, and successfully smashed, the Duke of Portland's hat.

And when they left Dublin, the platform resounded with cries of "Come back," and an old Irishwoman sobbed it out: "Ah, ye will come back," and some of the children said they were so glad they could love the King because he had been so nice to the Pope. And "come back" they did a year later,<sup>1</sup> and laid a foundation stone of a College of Science, and saw some moderate racing at Punchestown, and at the "Command Performance" the whole audience stood up in one wave towards the Royal Box and sang "God Save the King" twice over, and the verdict of the Irish, who know something about beauty and kindness, was that the King was as kind and the Queen as beautiful as ever.

But between the two visits there had been for the Queen a sharp pang of pain; the octogenarian Duke of Cambridge, as full of honours as of years, had died after a short illness. Uncle George was the first friend the Queen had known in England; he had known her from her own childhood and always brought back to her memories of Rumpenheim; he was as warm-hearted as he was hot-tempered, and he had dearly loved his niece *à la mode de Bretagne*, and was never tired of telling people that she was the most lovely being in the world. Aunt Augusta, she

<sup>1</sup>There was a third visit in 1907 when the King and Queen remained on the yacht; the occasion was somewhat clouded by the sinister theft of the State jewels.

### *THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE*

was sure, would feel it dreadfully. "I know how devoted you were to one another," she wrote, "and the wrench must be terrible. Thank God he died so peaceably, just went to sleep without pain or struggle. I saw him a fortnight ago; he was his own dear self in mind, only his sight and hearing had got so bad of late. I have always felt nearer to him than to any of his other relations."

## CHAPTER XXV

IN 1905 Queen Alexandra's attention was drawn once more to Russia and to her relations with that country and its ruler. The Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902—which later Mr. Balfour's delicate fingers rather unhappily tore to shreds—had been wholly distasteful to Russia; in order to restore and strengthen amicable Anglo-Russian feelings, King Edward early in 1904 nominated Sir Charles Hardinge as his Ambassador to St. Petersburg and proved himself truly *felix opportunitate*. "Please tell the King," Hardinge wrote to Lord Knollys,<sup>1</sup> "that owing to Bena being one of the Queen's ladies, and to my having accompanied the King during his foreign trip last year, my appointment has been regarded as entirely due to Their Majesties' initiative, and as a guarantee of peace and of more friendly relations between the two Governments." Six months later came the ugly Dogger Bank incident, and the Queen could gather from Lady Hardinge's letters that it required all the calm courage of the British representative to obviate a crisis which might result in a definite breach of peace. Nor, according to evidence recently forthcoming, was Queen Alexandra altogether supine at this juncture. "The English Govern-

<sup>1</sup>On his accession, the King raised his faithful and super-efficient Private Secretary to the Peerage.

## BJORKO

ment," wrote the German Chancellor, "has quietly endeavoured not to let it come to war with Russia." Still more zealous in this respect were the two Danish sisters, the Dowager Tsaritsa and Queen Alexandra of England who, it will be remembered, in 1885, at the time of the Afghan crisis, did much to bring about an understanding between the Whale and the Bear. Meanwhile the Kaiser was secretly preparing the sinister stroke which he very deftly delivered on the 25th of July, at Björkö, a small island of the Baltic. Here he had arranged to meet the Tsar who was specially enjoined to have no Minister *à la suite*, and at Björkö he drew from his pocket the cut and dried scheme which involved a sheer and shameless betrayal of Russia's ally, the All-Highest scornfully alluding to France as "a republic of miserable citizens." The Tsar, taken at a disadvantage and talked to a standstill, scrawled his name across the paper, and the Kaiser telegraphed exultantly to his Chancellor that he felt as if William I and Nicholas I had clasped hands in Heaven and were looking down with satisfaction upon their grandsons. But the signatures proved to be scarcely worth the sheet they were written on; it only needed Count Lamsdorff, the Russian Foreign Minister and M. Bompard, the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, to put their heads together a few weeks later and tell the Tsar, in so many words, that the Björkö agreement cut right across the Dual Alliance and was therefore only food for the wastepaper basket.

Meanwhile William had not wasted a moment. A *sous entente* of the "Agreement" was that in the



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

event of any British move on the Baltic, Germany and Russia would jointly occupy Denmark so long as any hostilities lasted. It was therefore necessary to "sound" the King as quickly as possible, and the Kaiser arrived at Fredensborg at the end of the month, to find himself an unwelcome—and for the matter of that an uninvited—guest in a frozen atmosphere. The Björkö secret had oozed out in London through the Crown Princess of Greece, who had been staying at Buckingham Palace;<sup>1</sup> the moment she heard it Queen Alexandra had penned a passionate letter to her father; she was "quite horrified," she wrote, "at the bare thought of his 'betraying England;'" the thing itself was of course quite unthinkable. The appeal was scarcely needed, but it strengthened the brave old King's determination to turn an entirely deaf ear to the stormy wooing of his exalted guest and the Kaiser left Denmark smarting under the unusual—and very uncomfortable—feeling of having been politely snubbed. And King Christian sent a special messenger to England to assure his daughter, and anyone to whom she might like to pass the information that in all circumstances Denmark would observe the strictest neutrality. The English Press "caught at" and spread the story that Wilhelm not only wanted Denmark to close the Baltic to all ships other than those of Baltic nations, but was also coveting the Crown of Norway for one of his sons.

<sup>1</sup>"My sisters tell me the King is trying to find out whether [*sic*] they know anything of what has been going on." [Willy-Nicky Letters.]

## KING CHRISTIAN

Three months later the Kaiser was on wires again about Denmark. The King and Queen had received in all friendliness King Christian's special envoy, Count Frijs, who had been sent to obtain an assurance of England's neutrality in the case of a European war; "The . . . arch mischief-maker of Europe in London is at work again," was the opening sentence in a telegram of "warning" to the Tsar. Then Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, was invited by the Empress Marie to spend a few days at Copenhagen as her guest, and was the bearer of a private letter from Queen Alexandra to her sister. "He has sent your Ambassador to Copenhagen on a clandestine mission to your Mother with instructions to win her over to influence you for a policy against me." So ran another furious telegram, but "Nicky" was getting a little tired of "Willy" and replied curtly: "Benckendorff went with my permission as my Mother invited him to come as a friend of the Danish family. Benckendorff is a loyal subject and a real gentleman who would never lend himself to any tricks."

The Press, however, would have been scarcely fair in attributing to the Kaiser any definite wish that any one of his sons should mount the throne of Norway; curiously enough his nominee, if he can be said to have had one, was Prince Waldemar of Denmark, Queen Alexandra's youngest brother, but the bare suggestion was quickly withdrawn on the reminder that German Protestantism would be shocked if it were thought the Kaiser had recom-

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

mended for high place a Prince whose wife was a devout Roman Catholic. Beyond objecting, on principle, to anything which "Uncle Bertie" might desire, William played no forward part when, early in June, the Storthing decreed a dissolution between Sweden and Norway and handsomely suggested they would accept a Bernadotte prince for their constitutional ruler. The King of Sweden curtly declined the latter overture and Norway, having made the *beau geste*, looked to Denmark alone for their King; before the month had run out a definite offer of a crown was being made to Prince Charles, and Baron Vedel, the Norwegian Minister at Copenhagen, was appealing to the King and Queen to urge their son-in-law to accept it forthwith. The official attitude of England was one of strict neutrality but the King and Queen, with the prospects of their daughter at stake, could not but regard the matter as one of domestic concern, although, when their opinion was first invited by the Court at Copenhagen, the King would commit himself no further on paper than to say how unfortunate would be a Norwegian Republic.

At the end of June, however, the British Minister to Sweden<sup>1</sup> sent word that a definite offer of the Norwegian Throne was being tendered to Prince Charles; this was "business" and, in reply to a telegram from his *chargé d'affaires* at Copenhagen, the King drafted a note that, "with the concurrence of the Queen," he would gladly see Prince Charles accept the Throne of Norway should the King of

<sup>1</sup>Sir James Rennell Rodd, subsequently British Ambassador in Rome, created Baron Rennell in 1932.

## THE NORWEGIAN THRONE

Sweden not wish any of his family to ascend it; a rider was added that the King and Queen had "no desire to interfere and everything must be subject to the King of Denmark's wishes."

As the candidature of a son-in-law of Queen Alexandra might not have been wholly palatable to the King of Sweden (and even less so to his German daughter-in-law), King Edward did what he could to sweeten that Monarch by making him an honorary Admiral of the Fleet and by giving the Garter to the Crown Prince whose eldest son had just married the daughter of the Duke of Connaught. Then the Kaiser was due at Copenhagen at the end of July, and even if he had no paternal axe to grind, he was not likely to see eye to eye with the English Court; with characteristic distortion of fact he had told the Tsar at Björkö that "the King of England had declared his choice of his son-in-law." So it was high time for Prince Charles, if he intended to go to Norway at all, to go there quickly, but nothing would induce him to stir a foot without the King of Denmark's official consent and until summoned by a popular vote.

In vain King Edward urged his son-in-law to make his way to Christiania lest someone should take his place, or that the worst should befall Norway in the form of a Republic. King Oscar, meanwhile, was in a tight place; the precise terms of separation had not been finally agreed upon and the separation itself<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The bitter feeling died a slow death, and at a Court Ball in Stockholm the following year officers were forbidden by their Commanding Officer to dance with the daughter of the Norwegian Minister.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

was so odious to the military party in Sweden that some of the officers actually turned their backs on their Sovereign because he declined any sort of idea of going to war over it. The Crown Prince of Denmark therefore hesitated to press his son's candidature, anyhow until the farewell Proclamation were actually issued.

But the British Minister at Copenhagen<sup>1</sup> was now bringing pressure to bear on the Danish Government to let Prince Charles go forward and threatened to urge Baron Vedel to take the bull by the horns and march off with the man of the moment, with or without the consent of his grandfather. Still Prince Charles remained obdurate; he declared—and Queen Alexandra, however anxious to see her daughter wear a Crown, applauded the dictum—that no Danish Prince could accept a foreign Throne without his Sovereign's explicit consent, and without that consent, and a direct invitation from Norway, he would not cross the Cattegat. In vain King Edward wrote that it was a question of now or never; he reminded the Prince that his own sister<sup>2</sup> was said to be intriguing against him, and that, at all costs, he should hurry to Norway and help in the negotiation between the two countries. The Queen, he added, thought "that, in such case, Maud and Baby<sup>3</sup> might follow a little later." But Charles, Maud and Baby remained firmly where they were for two months more until, on the 9th of October, an agreement was reached between the disunited countries as to

<sup>1</sup>Hon. Alan Johnstone, 4th son of the Lord Derwent.

<sup>2</sup>Princess Ingeborg.

<sup>3</sup>Prince Olaf.



NOV. 26-1966-Appended

THE ROYAL FAMILY 1966  
(KING EDWARD AND QUEEN ALIXANDRA THE KING AND QUEEN OF NORWAY  
PRINCESS VICTORIA AND THE ROYAL CHILDREN)

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## KING HAAKON

boundaries and other more or less complicated relations; a fortnight later King Oscar addressed a letter to the Storting renouncing the Norwegian Throne—in favour of whom he did not seem much to care—and recognising Norway's complete independence. Still Prince Charles would not stir; he was still standing out, so he sent word to Queen Alexandra, for a popular vote or referendum in view of possible future internal complications. By now, however, Norway was beckoning to him so emphatically that he finally agreed to accept an invitation from the Storting provided the Norwegian Foreign Minister would record in black and white his own preference for a popular vote.

The issue was precisely in accordance with Queen Alexandra's justifiable ambition and personal wishes. She wanted her daughter—the daughter who as a merry child had been familiarly known to her family as Harry—to be a Queen, but throughout the negotiations she had entirely endorsed her son-in-law's determination to respond to nothing less than a whole-hearted invitation from the country over whose destinies he would preside.

It now only remained for Haakon VII and his Consort to make a solemn, and very welcome, entry into Christiania, to allow the Prime Minister to place crowns on their heads and to let the King and Queen know that as they wished their first State visit to be to London, they would deal diplomatically with the Kaiser who had sent out a feeler as to coming with a considerable suite and at the earliest possible moment to their capital.



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

The question of the Norwegian Throne had been thus satisfactorily settled but for the moment what was nearer to the Queen's heart was what Ruskin wrote of as "the vexed question of the destinies of the unemployed workmen." In his Guildhall speech the Prime Minister<sup>1</sup> with some passion bade the public bestir themselves in some initial effort to alleviate the growing distress due to the demon of unemployment; he suggested, perhaps a little obscurely, that Parliament had provided a channel through which timely help might be given to those who would otherwise fall into the pauper ranks. Queen Alexandra may, or may not, have thought that any flow through a Parliamentary channel, however regular, would be the reverse of rapid; anyhow two days later she signed and sent out an appeal "to all charitably disposed people in the Empire, both men and women, to assist me in alleviating the suffering of the poor starving unemployed this winter." She asked that a thousand pounds should be quickly allotted to the Church Army and the same sum to the Salvation Army, and was willing that the balance of the contributions should be distributed through Distress Committees set up under the Unemployed Workmen's Act, her only stipulation being that her own treasurer, Lord de Grey, should be one of the small committee appointed to control the sums applicable to the United Kingdom outside London. And to show that the appeal was least of all perfunctory, she enforced it by drawing from her by no means bulging purse

<sup>1</sup>Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

### *QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S FUND*

£2,000 with which to head the subscription list. The Queen had said she was sure that people would be "kind," but she was perhaps a little startled, as well as gratified, by the volume and alacrity of the response to an appeal which was read as purely personal; before the end of the year £125,000 had poured in to Queen Alexandra's Fund, and before the Fund closed in January, £30,000 more had come in, Lady Strathcona giving 10,000 guineas with the condition that nine-tenths of the amount should be spent on emigrating suitable persons to Canada.

## CHAPTER XXVI

"A SEA king's daughter" was an ascription picturesque rather than historically correct, but anyhow Queen Alexandra loved the sea and enjoyed more than anything else the Mediterranean cruises in the Royal yacht; the spring cruise of 1906 had special attractions. At Marseilles on the 5th of April the King joined her and Princess Victoria, having travelled from his beloved Biarritz; he had there taken the opportunity of a heart-to-heart talk with King Alfonso and had smoothed out arrangements for his niece's wedding. The Queen had first-hand knowledge that this had been a love match and at first sight; the year before Alfonso had been on a visit to London (he was just a little annoyed that the return visit had been to Cartagena instead of Madrid), and at the Buckingham Palace banquet had asked the Queen who was the lovely creature on the opposite side of the table. "Princess Beatrice's girl," was the reply, and Alfonso had mentally registered a vow that "Princess Beatrice's girl" should be his bride.

At Marseilles the yacht was detained for four days by one of the odious gales to which the Mediterranean is no stranger, but when Corfu was reached on the eleventh there were found not only King George and the Mediterranean Fleet under Lord Charles Beres-

## OLYMPIC GAMES

ford—with whom an unhappy difference could now be happily made up—but also the Prince and Princess of Wales on their return from India.

From Corfu the Royal Family proceeded to Athens to witness a revival of the ancient Olympic Games which took place in the new, and staringly white, stadium; for British onlookers, and there were many, the most exciting event was held in a garden outside the marble structure, when a British fencing team, headed by Lord Desborough,<sup>1</sup> met representatives of Germany and, largely owing to the skill of their leader, soundly defeated them. Lord Desborough met in single combat a very stout German who received at the hands of his agile antagonist a prodding which must have made every bone in his body ache and ache again. The Greek manifestations of delight, when the English team won by nine points to two, were so pronounced that King Edward, after a hurried whisper with the Queen, begged the English captain to give three cheers for the Germans who had put up a plucky fight and had taken their defeat in good spirit.

The King had been a little disposed to pooh-pooh Greek sports but everybody had found them so

<sup>1</sup>A budding journalist was inspired to write:

Lord Desborough of Taplow  
Went first into the fight,  
And the Grenfell griffins on his crest  
Were nodding black as night.

Two Kings sat by that tented field  
Two Queens were looking on  
When those black eagles spread their wings  
And the English roses shone.

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enjoyable that he could write to a friend: "The International Olympic Games have been a wonderful sight with myriads of spectators in the vast amphitheatre. We are leaving for Naples and the Queen and my daughter think of continuing their cruise."

Nor had the stay in Athens been without some political import. There had been a recrudescence of trouble in Crete and the four protecting Powers had just reported that some of the fermentation was due to the arbitrary rule of Prince George of Greece. Queen Alexandra had no little influence with the brother she had so constantly defended, and that influence was brought to bear on the anxious discussions between King Edward and the King of the Hellenese, as the result of which Prince George resigned the High Commissionership and his father, to general satisfaction, nominated M. Zaimis, a greatly respected ex-Prime Minister, to succeed him.

Except for the State visits from and to foreign Sovereigns and for residences at Windsor, routine, with its functions and festivities, differed little from what had been followed in past days. The King dined out frequently and stayed at country houses for racing and shooting; the Queen, although she would constantly pay private visits to personal friends, especially those who were any way sick or sorry, only allowed herself to be "entertained" at the great houses. They were together for the most part at Buckingham Palace and always at Sandringham for birthdays and festive gatherings, but the King had generally left Balmoral for Newmarket before the Queen arrived there from Denmark.

## CHATSWORTH

And for the New Year there would be the great parties at Chatsworth with the best shooting reserved for the King—who however was no longer so keen a shot as he used to be—and there was golf and a great deal of bridge (one evening the Duke of Devonshire tossed aside one of his foreign Orders because he said the damned thing was bringing him bad luck, only happily the King did not hear the blasphemy), and the “double Duchess” could talk over the old days and the old friends with the Queen, and for the private theatricals Charles Hawtrey, perhaps the Queen’s favourite actor, would come down and not only coach the distinguished amateurs but take his part with them. The result was perhaps a little uneven but very enjoyable, and Queen Alexandra would tiptoe in to watch the rehearsals and thought that nobody saw her at the back of the room, and of course the players pretended they were quite unaware of her presence; and it was all very good fun as well as very gorgeous, for the Duchess was an incomparable hostess and let her guests feel that by enjoying themselves they were pleasing her.

And at Chatsworth in January 1907 the King suddenly said that the first week in February was fairly free of engagements and proposed that he and the Queen should spend it together in Paris *in quasi incognito*; they would “do” the theatres and restaurants and studios and see their friends, as far as possible, like ordinary mortals. And wholly enjoyable was every moment of the week spent at the British Embassy, where the Queen occupied the bed-chamber unaltered in appearance since Pauline

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Borghese was its tenant; and in the small dining-room hung with Gobelin tapestries they gave their little luncheon- and dinner-parties. Many of the King's former coterics such as Comte de St. Priest, Madame de Galiffet, Madame de Sagan were missing, but there still remained many friends to entertain and be entertained. Sir Francis Bertie and his wife—forty-four years earlier Lady Feodorowna had been bridesmaid to the Queen—betook themselves to the Hotel Bristol which was still very *chic* though, like the Café Voisin where the Ambassadors entertained the King and Queen to dinner, it was by now sadly out of date.

The only "function" was a *déjeuner* at the Élysée when M. Fallières duly presented M. Clemenceau, the new Prime Minister, to his guests, and the Paris papers spoke of the greeting between the King and President as being "almost affectionate." And the Queen made herself specially pleasant to the Ministers and their wives; she remembered that when the King came to the throne he had insisted that the members of his Embassy should treat French officials with the same cordiality which they had hitherto reserved for the French Society which knew not the Élysée. The Standishes of course gave a dinner and invited Victorien Sardou, an old acquaintance of the King but whom the Queen now met for the first time; and Sir Reginald Lister<sup>1</sup> gave a breakfast after which Madame Jean de Reszke sang; she had nearly as fine a voice and was quite as good a musician as her husband (Jean used to say she was much better), but

<sup>1</sup>First Secretary to the Embassy; second son of Lord Ribblesdale.

## PARIS

very few people were privileged to hear her, and the Queen could reproach her with being almost as shy of displaying her talents as her brother-in-law Victor—the real tenor—who could never be persuaded to lift up his voice in public. And they went to see the new telegraphic photography at the offices of *L'Illustration*, and to the circus, and Réjane was at her very best. One evening was devoted to the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt to see *Les Bouffons*. That evening they had a little dinner-party so an Equerry<sup>1</sup> was sent to ask Sarah if she would start the play a little later as the Queen particularly wanted to be there before the curtain rose, and Sarah, who knew no half measures, would have postponed the *trois coups* till midnight to please Queen Alexandra whom she adored as ever.

The Paris populace watched for the visitors as they came and went and were obviously pleased with the whole thing: "*Evidemment ils se sentent chez eux*," was the remark tossed from lip to lip. The *Matin* wrote that the sole meaning of the King's visit was to show once more the pleasure he takes in spending a few days in Paris, only now the Queen Alexandra accompanies the King for the first time since she has shared the burden of the Crown of England, and France has the honour of saluting her as well as the Sovereign. The German press of course struck another note, and the *Reichbote* sourly remarked that "The King of England wants to see for himself what is taking place in his branch establishment in Paris," a comment which provoked the King to tell Prince

<sup>1</sup>Sir Seymour Fortescue.



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von Radolin, the German Ambassador, that, dearly as he loved Paris, he was there this time for one purpose only, and that was to please the Queen.

Six years had now sped since King Edward's accession; the Kaiser's formal call on England could not be put off for another year, and in November of 1907 with the Kaiserin he was to be a State guest at Windsor. He had been rather "difficult" about the arrangements for this function. He wanted a bevy of high dignitaries with him, and especially an Admiral who had gained King Edward's marked disfavour. To avoid anything like friction the King was prepared to swallow his own personal feelings, only suggesting that the coming of Prince von Bülow might be unfortunate on account of that statesman's unpleasant remarks about our methods of conducting the South African War. Then, when every detail of the Imperial visit had been worked out, the Emperor telegraphed that he had caught a cold, and thought he had better not travel, and might the Crown Prince come in his place. This sudden reluctance the King knew was only due to comments in the German Press that the Emperor would have a bad reception in London; he was therefore afraid to "face the music." However, a telegram went to Potsdam couched in such vigorous terms of remonstrance that the Kaiser said he felt better and would stick to plan. Then somebody told somebody who told Queen Alexandra that the German Empress had written to Count Jenisch: "As Empress and wife I have gone to Denmark and have been friendly and polite because it was my duty. But this is the first

## THE KAISER AT WINDSOR

time that I, a daughter of the Northern Marches, have had to make friends with the Danes. It cuts me to the heart when I see Germans in North Schleswig being penalised by being too accommodating towards Denmark. The Danes have spoken fair, but they are false."

However, things were smoothed out and the Kaiser and Kaiserin arrived on the 11th of November in a thick November fog. And there was shooting in the Park, and the King headed off his nephew when he tried to talk politics, and there was a luncheon to which eight Sovereigns sat down, and a Command Performance, and the War Minister dashed backwards and forwards between Windsor and London with messages from the Kaiser about the Baghdad Railway. And the Kaiser wrote to the Tsar that he had "removed many causes of misunderstanding and distrust so that the atmosphere is clean." And then, the day after he left London, the German Government announced its intention of adding considerable strength to the German Fleet.

This last was a little too much, and the Anglo-German cordiality, which for a few weeks had been quite noticeable, melted away; even "Little Englanders" recognised that England had to deal with a determined antagonist, and naval rivalry between the two countries began to grow more and more acute.

Towards the close of this year the German Ambassador in London let it be known that his Imperial Master intended to come to an arrangement with Russia as to the territorial *status quo* in the Baltic; Sweden was to be roped into the agreement, Den-

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mark was to be left outside. Not for a moment would King Edward permit this slight to his Consort's country; his protest was effective, and in April, 1908 the four littoral Powers of the Baltic officially recognised, in principle, the maintenance of the *status quo* and Germany was vocal as to the agreement giving proof that she had no thought of grabbing any of the smaller Baltic States. Then, as a pendant, Great Britain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Holland signed their names to a similar "principle" in regard to the North Sea, and this Germany accepted, or professed to accept, as a set-off to the understanding between England and the three Latin Powers regarding the Mediterranean.

While these *pourparlers* were proceeding, the King and Queen were persuaded that, in order to foster international amity, now was the time for them to go to the Scandinavian capitals, and early in February, 1908 Rennell Rodd wrote that the visit of the King and Queen was eagerly wished for and that the first visit of a British Sovereign and his Consort to Sweden would be an outstanding event in the history of that nation. There was one small fly in the ointment. King Gustav was a little touchy about Norway's recent prominence in the public eye and would be rather upset if Copenhagen were taken before Stockholm. This, the King said, could be "quite happily settled," and at the end of April, two days after the Norwegian and Baltic agreements had been signed, he arrived with the Queen from Copenhagen to find, according to the local press, "a sea of smiling faces."

## SCANDINAVIA

There was a Horse Show and an opera beside the usual banquet, and the King of Sweden was most affably asked if he might come to England in the autumn, and he regretted in graceful terms that the Queen, on account of ill-health, was unable to take part in the welcome; perhaps the regret was not wholly shared by his guests; the Queen of Sweden was such a very pro-German German. And King Haakon, although he was the senior, did not in the least mind having been "taken" after King Gustav, so if the stay in Christiania was all too short, the welcome was of the warmest and Queen Maud's only regret was that her parents did not see her country in the beauty of its winter garb.

In fifty years Victoria had paid no visit to a Foreign Court except to King Leopold for a family conclave: nor would she willingly receive any Sovereign other than those who had family relations. Within six years Edward and Alexandra had received, and been received by, almost every European Monarch and in the German Chancellor's Journal for 1908 there is an entry to the effect that the chief political event of the year is the meeting between the King and Queen of England and the Russian Imperial couple at Reval. This was of course an *ex parte* statement and, however happy the occasion proved to be, may have been a little over coloured; anyhow Sir Edward Grey was forward to say in the House of Commons that the projected visit was on the lines of other marks of goodwill shown to other Sovereigns, and that no treaty with Russia was in

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any way involved. Not only were the Tsar and Tsaritsa eager to welcome their uncle and aunt, but the President of the Duma sent a calculated message through Reuter that the coming of the King and Queen was both opportune and natural now that representative government in Russia was set on a firm basis. Not so harmonious however were the opinions of the leaders of the Labour Party in England, who regarded the *démarche* as wholly unjustifiable in view of the Russian internal conditions, one party leader alluding to the Tsar as a common murderer and objecting to the King hobnobbing with the bloodstained creature. The King, however, annoyed by the clumsy protests of malcontents, declined to allow any current of political agitation to interfere with an act of courtesy towards Royal kinsfolk, and on the 5th of June, with the Queen and Princess Victoria, he boarded the Royal yacht at Port Victoria and steamed for Kiel. The sea was at its roughest and the King and Queen were almost alone in immunity from its rude effects, the Queen apparently enjoying the boisterous breezes which laid low her ladies-in-waiting. The escorting squadron, ordered to join the yacht at the entrance to the Canal, was drawn from the Minotaur class and there was much chuckling over the story, which if *trovato* was *ben*, that the Admiralty had chosen this particular class in order to poke fun at Germany as the vessels drew too much water to pass through the strategic Canal.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Whether this was the case or not Germany anyhow set herself forthwith to the very expensive task of deepening and broadening

## REVAL

At Kiel, on the 7th of June, Prince and Princess Henry of Prussia came on board with a large retinue, some of whom had evidently been told off to pump members of the Royal Suite as to the exact why and wherefore of the journey to Reval. In vain was it asserted that the visit partook almost entirely of a family character; Queen Alexandra had known her nephew from his babyhood and it was not unnatural that she would like to see him as Emperor, if not in his capital anyhow in his own territorial waters; the Empress was the daughter of King Edward's favourite sister, but even if he wished it, the King would have no chance of exercising any British influence over here; and it was rather ingeniously suggested that as Reval had been founded by a Danish King, it had special interest for a Danish King's daughter. But the German courtiers stuck to their point; Sir Charles Hardinge was in attendance and Foreign Office negotiations were surely afoot: Sir John Fisher was also of the party, which could only mean that Germany's naval strength would be under discussion. And when, it was rather acidly asked, were the King and Queen going to return the visit of the Kaiser and Kaiserin?

The *Victoria and Albert* was off Reval on the morning of the 9th of June and two Royal yachts were awaiting her. On board the *Standart* were the Emperor and Empress and their children—the Queen seeing for the first time her grand-nephew the Tsarevich and his sisters, all of them destined to a

the Canal, and the work was complete just before the declaration of war, six years later.

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common massacre; on board the *Polar Star*, to the Queen's great delight, was not only the Empress Marie but Queen Olga of the Hellenes, the sister-in-law who now meant a great deal to her and who later was to make her home largely at Sandringham and Marlborough House.

There was a luncheon on board the *Polar Star* but the Tsaritsa was too tired to come to it, and at the dinner on the *Victoria and Albert* a question of etiquette suddenly arose. The Dowager Empress, according to Russian right, took precedence of the Consort of the Sovereign and would not care to yield the *pas* while the Tsaritsa would have been greatly indisposed to "walk behind;" King Edward solved the momentary difficulty by taking an Empress on each arm and asking them to keep step. The toasts after the Emperor's banquet on board the *Standart* were couched in friendliest terms, so friendly that the Kaiser was quite glad he had arranged an early meeting with the Tsar in Finnish waters when he could administer some judicious antidote to too amicable Anglo-Russian relations; the *Vossische Zeitung* darkly reminded its readers that the "ship of European peace carries other passengers (besides England and Russia) who require to be considered in order to prevent the whole party from being in danger." And the Tsar, knowing his Aunt Alix's love for music, had prepared a little surprise for her. A Russian choir, having been stripped to the skin to ensure their being void of any offensive weapon, were put on board a tug within a stone's throw of the yacht, and, under the moonlight, serenaded

## THE KIEL CANAL

the Royal guests deliciously for a couple of hours.

On the 11th of June the King and Queen turned homewards and were to be treated to one of their nephew's elaborate theatrical effects. The Kaiser had given orders that the *Victoria and Albert* should be escorted through the Kiel Canal by troops of cavalry riding on each bank. It was a bright idea but it did not quite "come off" as the maximum pace of the horsemen was a good deal less than even the retarded speed of the vessel, and the air must have been black with curses as the riders bumped and clattered along the road. But Queen Alexandra heard little and saw less; in the Kiel Canal she preferred to draw down the blinds of her sumptuous cabin.



## CHAPTER XXVII

"UNCLE BERTIE was all sunshine at Cronberg and in very good humour. He intends visiting Berlin officially with Aunt Alix next year." So reported the Kaiser to the Tsar in August 1908, and it sounded pleasant enough, but all the same the meeting between King and Tsar at Reval had left a bitter taste in William's mouth; if, as Uncle Bertie pretended, it had been a sort of family affair, why was an important Foreign Office official one of the party? The Kaiser might sign himself "Your very affectionate nephew," and send "best love to Aunt Alix," but in his own rather distorted mind's eye he saw King Edward as the wicked uncle bent on encircling Germany with a ring of steel, and he was pretty sure that Queen Alexandra aided and abetted him in his nefarious schemes. Uncle Bertie had tried to detach Francis Joseph from the Triple Alliance, he had coerced Alfonso into a secret Anglo-Spanish Agreement, he was trying to enmesh Humbert into a Mediterranean Entente, and, to top it all up, he had quite certainly concerted with Nicky active measures against Germany. If he were now to back out of his intention to come to Berlin, and moreover if he were not to come in full sovereign state, the Imperial cup of wrath would surely froth over.

But, unless the Queen should demur, the King had

## TO BERLIN

no thought of varying or postponing his plan. A visit to Berlin, the heart and home of Prussianism, offered, of course, no pleasing prospect to Queen Alexandra; for the inside of a week she would have to mask her feelings and be "very nice" to a ruler she cordially disliked, and his very German Consort, of whom she knew very little but who was known to be antipathetic to Denmark; but the King had only to represent to her how useful it would be if Anglo-German relations could be improved and to remind her that William had really behaved rather well through the Bosnian crisis to secure her ready acquiescence.

A programme which both King and Queen<sup>1</sup> thought a little overcrowded was agreed upon, and on the 8th of February they set out on the last journey they would make to Germany. At Dover the King's equanimity was roughly disturbed by seeing the Royal Standard fluttering over the castle; surely, as he explained to the Queen who took the matter a little too calmly, any soldier should know that the Royal Standard could only be hoisted over any building or ship actually occupied by the Sovereign; would Lord Grenfell, who was *à la suite*, be good enough to report the matter to the War Office in fairly strong terms.<sup>2</sup>

Berlin was reached the following morning, and at

<sup>1</sup>The Queen, however, added to it a visit to the Virchow Hospital; she thought she might pick up some thing useful for "the London."

<sup>2</sup>By a sad slip the same thing happened on the return journey; only this time Lord Grenfell contrived to keep the King in his cabin while signals were made to haul down the flag.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

the station, surrounded by dignitaries in dazzling array, were the Kaiser and Kaiserin, the former especially effusive in embraces. Kissing was an exercise which the Queen was always disposed to discourage, and her friends and Household knew better than to make any attempt to impress their lips on her hand, a form of homage she positively disliked. But she was determined to make the best of the whole occasion and accepted without wincing the three rather loud kisses on which William insisted both on arrival and departure.

By happy coincidence on this 9th of February news was to hand that France and Germany had reached a final and fairly amicable arrangement in regard to Morocco. The negotiations had been a little complicated as the Casabianca "incident" of the deserters from the Foreign Legion in 1908 was involved, and the Hague Tribunal in arbitrating had dared to censure a "grave and manifest fault of the Chancellor of the German Consulate." But the Kaiser had really been very sensible and had refused to allow a minor point, which had arisen, to be made a *casus belli*; he had listened to good advice from the Austrian Emperor, he was sure that Francis Joseph—who, a year ago, had let King Edward down so badly—would be pleased that this trouble had been smoothed out, and altogether he was in a very happy mood. So much so that in the course of the afternoon he was good enough to give Lord Grenfell some advice on military matters; he was fluent in suggestions about the newly formed Territorial Force; he thought it would be quite unnecessary and very

## LIEBE TANTE

foolish for England ever to contemplate any means of conscription, and he was quite sure that aircraft would be useless for offensive purposes in war.

The State entry into Berlin was calculated to be highly impressive; twenty thousand superb cavalry and infantry of the Guard, irreproachable in physique and drill and sprinkled with veterans wearing the 1870 medal, lined the route from the railway station to the Palace. The February sun shone brightly enough, but the crowds were by no means warm in welcome and the procession itself was held up by an awkward accident; the distances were badly kept and the horses, harnessed to the coach in which the Queen and Kaiserin were seated, fell down and the occupants had to alight and be accommodated in a more modest equipage apportioned to members of the suite; then the horses, having been got on their feet, jibbed badly and a handful of hefty spectators had to be called on to push the heavy coach out of the way. Queen Alexandra treated the mishap as rather a good joke; the Kaiser took quite a different view and treated the Master of the Horse to a "talking to" which must have made that splendid official shiver in his jack boots; nor would he feel happier when the Kaiser presented him to the King with: "Here is the man who made such a fearful bungle with the horses."

The Emperor's wrath was the greater because he really wanted this time to make a favourable impression on his *Liebe Tante*, as he liked to address her; he was not quite so pleased when the *Liebe Tante* alluded to him as "my nephew" instead of

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"the Emperor;" it was surely a little irreverent to treat him, even in private, as if he were just one of her relations, although Queen Victoria had once said—and her grandson had heard it—"that such notions were almost too vulgar to be believed."

The banquet that evening was held in the White Salon in the castle, and the Queen duly admired the gilded ceiling and superb chandeliers to which her host drew her especial attention; it was a subject on which they need have no difference of opinion. King Edward had been put on his guard; he knew that the toast to his health had been concocted by the Kaiser and the Imperial Chancellor and, contrary to his usual custom, he read his carefully worded reply in which there was a marked, and deliberate, reference to the Queen. He was determined that neither her own complaisance in coming to Berlin, nor the special honour paid to her there, should be overlooked. There was underlined the phrase: "Although I have the most pleasant memories of my frequent visits to Kiel, Wilhelmshaven and Cronberg, it gives me special pleasure that the Queen should have been able to accompany me on this visit and that we should have been welcomed here in this ancient castle, the seat of Your Majesty's ancestors."

The visit to the Rathaus next day, which the Kaiser had by no means approved, resulted in one of King Edward's many triumphs of tact and courtesy; he made a delightful little speech in German, he drank out of a golden goblet presented to him by a very pretty little girl, to whom he addressed a few words of thanks which brought the house down, and

## PRINCE VON BÜLOW

he beckoned to an old friend, who had been the Empress Frederick's medical attendant, to come and speak to him. It was all simple and spontaneous and un-Kaiserlike, but it did much to win Berlin's kindly opinion for a Sovereign whom Germany had been taught to regard with mistrust.

There followed a luncheon at the British Embassy when the Imperial Chancellor and his wife were treated as the chief guests, and the Queen was begged to remind Prince Bülow<sup>1</sup> how much the King hoped he would remain in office and help to make things easier. The meal was scarcely over when the King was seized with a violent fit of coughing which ended in something like a collapse; the Queen deftly unbuttoned his collar, which gave him immediate relief, and begged that the room might be cleared and a doctor summoned. The King's power of resilience, however, quickly asserted itself; in less than ten minutes he had recovered his breath, resumed his talk with Bülow and, in order to relieve any anxiety, relit his cigar. But for once the Queen put her foot down; she insisted that the King should dine that evening quietly in his own room, and that at the State Ball he should remain seated and not talk more than was absolutely necessary.

For a wind up the next evening there was a gala performance of a noisy, brassy, so-called opera, entitled *Sardanapalus*, and based—or rather perched—on the Taglioni Ballet. The Kaiser had attended the rehearsals, busied himself with all the "business" of the performers, and had made a great many

<sup>1</sup>Prince von Bulow resigned office before the end of the year.

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

suggestions, not all of which were quite practical, so he was in a position to explain everything to the Queen who, according to newspaper copy, appeared greatly interested. As a matter of fact she was more interested in persuading the King to allow her to receive on his behalf the Ambassadors and Ministers during the interval. This was a little bit of ritual from which she would usually have shrunk, but the King was obviously over-tired so the Queen nerved herself for an effort, identified, rather to her own surprise, the Orders worn by the diplomats, and succeeded in saying to each one, and to most of them in his own language, just the right word.

So exhausted was the King that he fell asleep in the last act and woke suddenly to think the theatre was on fire and to inquire rather angrily why the firemen at the corners of the proscenium did not do something to put it out. He was quickly assured that the only people in danger were Sardanapalus and his household who were being theatrically enveloped in the flames which spread with terrifying realism from the funeral pyre to the extremities of the stage.

King Edward was all the while quite obviously much below his former level of health and quite unable, even if he wished it, to discuss politics with his nephew or the Chancellor. But the visit, although heated remarks were rife as to its being scandalously belated, was a success; that the King and Queen of England should have come in midwinter, at some risk to health and at no little personal inconvenience, made a pleasant impression. But the impression soon faded under the strain of naval rivalry, and a

## TSAR AND TSARITSA

few months later little, if any, improvement in Anglo-German relations could be discerned.

But anxious as she always was for international peace, the Queen was beginning to be more anxious still about the King's health, for no close observer could fail to detect in him a deterioration of physical powers which reflected on everyday life. The routine of work and play remained much the same but there was no longer the same keen relish for it; the King retained all his eagerness to transact business, but there were occasional fits of depression and apparently even some doubt in his mind as to whether the workman should not of his own will lay down his tools. He went to Biarritz as usual but without deriving the usual benefit in health or spirits, and he sent word that, if it were desired he should come again, the town drains must be seriously looked to. He crossed the frontier to see the King of Spain, who was asked in friendly fashion to come to the Isle of Wight in the summer. From Biarritz the King went to Malta where he expressed, with considerable vehemence, his annoyance that the Fleet should have been sent to Lemnos without letting him know; at Baiae he had some colourless conversation with the King and Queen of Italy, and he returned to England looking as fagged as when he left, and, even in that short space of time perceptibly aged.

In August the Tsar and Tsaritsa came to Cowes to pay a return visit and steamed through the lines of the British Fleet; there had just been a Naval Review in the Solent and the Tsar was duly impressed—as it was intended he should be—by an



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

assemblage of twenty-four battleships, sixteen armoured cruisers, forty-eight destroyers and half a hundred other ships of war. There was much feasting and toasting on board the Royal yachts and the visit was in every way happy and did no little to further good Anglo-Russian relations; the Tsar was in good spirits and made himself pleasant to everybody, but the Queen was distressed to note that the Tsaritsa was on the edge of her nerves and she could not understand why the little Tsarevich would not respond—as other children always did—to King Edward's advances and attempts to play with him; the "poor little boy" must indeed be ailing. But she persuaded an over-anxious mother to allow the little boy and his sisters to go shopping in Cowes and this entirely novel experience was a delirious delight.

By now the political situation was beginning to darken, and a General Election was already threatened; with the return of the Liberal Government to power there would be a final tussle between Lords and Commons and the King might be called on to create a batch of Peers who would be new in the worst sense of the word. Then the King remembered that he was a landowner who loved his "place," scarcely less than the Queen, and cared for his tenants, and he was told that Mr. Lloyd George's Finance Bill would sound the death knell for a large number of landed proprietors both small and great, many of whom were his intimate friends. It was all very difficult and the Queen sadly saw the King no longer had the vitality, and sometimes not even the

## KING MANOEL

breath, to meet the difficulties as they arose; the flames of energy leapt as high as ever, but it required more and more effort to stoke the furnace of physical powers.

The visit of the boy King of Portugal to Windsor in November brought a streak of real pleasure; the young Ruler, whose rule was only to be a matter of months, was greatly elated at being given the Garter and incidentally remembered that King Carlos had to travel to the Highlands to fetch his. A devoted son would also remember that the King and Queen had ignored precedent and defied Protestant prejudice by attending the Solemn Mass of Requiem for his murdered father. An opportunity was taken to remind Manoel how admirably his country had been served by M. de Soveral, the urbane, but very shrewd, diplomatist who was *enfant cheri* everywhere, and nowhere more than at Buckingham Palace and Windsor. And with the New Year came the General Election and the political stewpot was even less savoury than before; the Liberal majority was so reduced that Mr. Asquith must look to the Irish Nationalists to back his measure, and the Irish Nationalists were out to drive a pretty hard bargain. The conditions were so complicated that the King was unwilling to leave England even for Biarritz although his fits of coughing were now terrible, and he hungered for the blue water and the sea breezes; moreover the authorities had seen to it that the drains should be put in perfect order. The doctors however were insistent as to the treachery of an early English spring and the daily risks of chill and

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

bronchitis, and the Queen begged her husband to try and recover his strength before the summer when the political situation would have cleared and he would have to be very active. So, early in March, King Edward gave his last dinner-party at Buckingham Palace—to which only his men friends were invited—and set out for the Basque coast.

Then in Paris the unhappy happened; the King was told he must see the much-trumpeted *Chantecler* which was supposed to be Rostand's masterpiece but rather proved to be Rostand's only frost. The "Porte St. Martin" was a draughty theatre, the third act was particularly dull, and the King, very excusably, fell asleep, caught a cold which developed on his journey South and resulted in a really sharp attack of bronchitis, the illness his physicians specially feared for him. The attack, which approached the critical stage, was kept, as far as possible, secret from everyone but the Queen, who, for more than a week, remained ready to start at an hour's notice, although urged not to do so for fear of alarming the patient.

The struggle was short and sharp and the King's fine constitution once more, but only once more, prevailed. Then he repeatedly begged the Queen not to forgo the visit she had planned to pay the King of the Hellenes. He assured her that he was really quite well again and had resumed his work and outdoor exercise, and so, after many postponements, the Queen, with Princess Victoria, boarded the *Victoria and Albert* at Genoa in mid April. There was a hideously rough passage to Corfu, but once there the weather changed, the sun shone, King George

## THE DEATH OF KING EDWARD

was for the moment unusually free from pressing troubles, and everything seemed "all right." And the King sent the most cheerful accounts of himself; he had made an excellent journey to London and was so little tired that he had gone the same evening to Covent Garden for *Rigoletto*; he was giving many audiences, among others one to Lord Kitchener whom he had entirely absolved from his promise about the Mediterranean Command; he was dining out once or twice, and he intended going to Sandringham for the week-end to talk over with Probyn some improvements in the garden which he knew the Queen would approve.

So without any misgivings the Queen arrived at Venice from Corfu on the 3rd of May; of all the places abroad she preferred Venice, and this time she intended to stay a week and see everything that ought to be seen at leisure. But that night, how or why she did not know, there came the conviction that the King was really ill, that he needed her as much as in the old days, that her place was in his sickroom, and that she must set out for it without an hour's delay. So every engagement was cancelled, the dressers were ordered to pack as rapidly as possible, the Queen would take the *Rapide* to Calais so as to reach London the next day. At Calais she realised how right she had been, and that had she stayed in Italy twenty-four hours longer, she might have been too late. The telegram put into her hand at the port was couched in words which were unmistakable, and in the teeth of a raging storm, the Queen embarked on the *Alexandra* for Dover, where a still graver

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message forbade any hope. At Victoria Station the Prince of Wales awaited his mother—it was the first time within her memory that the King himself had not come to meet her on her return to England—and her son's face revealed what somehow she already knew. The King was dying and coma might set in at any moment: the brave spirit was still trying to fight on: "I am not going to give in. I shall work to the end," were the words on his lips, but a long, and pretty hard, day's work was done, it was close on time to "cease upon the midnight with no pain." The King was sitting in his armchair—it was never easy to persuade him to stay in bed—and, true to character, he told the Queen, after the first greetings, he had given orders that the Royal Box at Covent Garden should be retained for her. "It is *Siegfried*, and I thought you might like to go." The Queen shook her head. "I have come back to be with you," she told him, and for those last thirty hours she scarcely left his side. Once more he was hers altogether, *hers* as when they exchanged their first shy greetings under the grey cathedral walls, *hers* as when they plighted their troth with kind Uncle Leopold as their willing witness, *hers* as when he bent over her pillow to whisper of his joy in their first-born child, *hers* as when in the hour of Denmark's sore trouble he dared his mother's displeasure to defend his young wife's cause. And hers was to be the memory which she would cherish more than any other that he had told her he would work for his country so long as there was breath in his body, and that to his last hour he had kept his word.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

"THE Queen Mother has been adored by the people ever since she came among them in the heyday of youth, and if her bereavement is almost too sacred a matter for public discussion, it is fitting that the House should not withhold the formal expression of its deep sympathy." So spoke Mr. Balfour, who for once allowed his heart no less than his brain to dictate his word, and the voice of the Commons was an accurate echo of the *vox populi*. For the sympathy of the people with Queen Alexandra—she at once declined the suggestion that she should be generally addressed as Queen Dowager or Queen Mother—was large and wholly sincere; she had quickly found, and ever since filled, a peculiar place in their hearts, and that place was further fortified by the letter she addressed to them which, however far from being a model of original composition, was obviously "her own." "Give me a thought in your prayers," she asked, "which will comfort and sustain me in all I have still to go through." And in all she had "to go through," what tore the worst at her heartstrings was the last look at the face on which she had first looked half a century ago; what she dreaded most was the day on which the pompous funeral rites must be carried out, and it was wholly characteristic of her to postpone from day to day the

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

dreaded occasion, and meanwhile to allow dear friends to come, one by one, and take their last farewell of a King who from end to end of his crowded life had never swerved from his friendships or failed a friend.

The Kaiser had done rather less than nothing to endear himself to King Edward in life, but for his Uncle's funeral he must head the *cortège* of forty-eight Royal Personages and ride on King George's right hand from Westminster Hall to Paddington Station. Bluejackets drew the gun-carriage from Windsor Station to St. George's Chapel, Kings and Princes following on foot; only one carriage was in the procession, and it contained Queen Alexandra and the Empress Marie; in the Chapel itself King George walked with his mother, to whom, by Queen Mary's special desire, were assigned all the honours of the occasion, the Kaiser escorting the Empress who, in her turn, had hurried to a sister in distress.

Queen Alexandra was not present at the subsequent luncheon which the King gave to the Sovereigns, Princes and Ambassadors, nor did she learn till much later that the Kaiser seized the opportunity to take the French Ambassador aside and—with the King's food scarcely out of his throat and the King's wine scarcely dry on his lips—make a sinister suggestion as to the possibility of France siding with Germany in the eventuality of Germany challenging England, a suggestion which M. Paul Cambon diplomatically affected to misunderstand.

The Queen Mother may well have had in mind two examples of exalted widowhood but was evidently

## THE QUEEN MOTHER

disinclined to shape her future by either pattern. Queen Victoria had allowed her untimely bereavement to overshadow, not only her life, but all its attendant circumstances; those who came near her must constantly remember that, if she were a great Sovereign, she was also a "lonely" and "broken" woman. Queen Alexandra's grief was, in more than one way, desolating, but she saw no reason why that grief should infect and depress others; her heart might ache but the smile need not be dismissed from her lips. Nor, on the other hand, would she cling to any status which was no longer hers by right. Her sister of Russia never forgot the precedence which she still enjoyed and would argue, quite unsuccessfully, that she could thereby claim to advise with authority the reigning Sovereigns. Queen Alexandra was at all times indisposed to offer advice and would instinctively shrink from anything like interference, and especially from any attempt to exercise influence where, as now, influence was unneeded. She knew, no one better, that the new King and Queen were equipped at every point to the parts assigned to them, and that a sense of duty would inspire them to play those parts with perfection. In a few simple words she commended her son and daughter-in-law to their people and withdrew into comparative retirement. There would be plenty to occupy her, plenty to interest her; she would always do anything to help, never anything to embarrass, and in the evening of life there would be nothing said or done which could dull by a shade the gold of her repute.

And the King saw to it that everything was made



## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

easy for her: she would remain at Buckingham Palace till Marlborough House was once more made ready for her, and an apartment in St. James's Palace would be her halfway house; she would take what carriages and horses she pleased, besides her own cars, from the Royal Mews; the *Victoria and Albert* would be at her disposal whenever she wished to cruise on board; and an escort of Household Cavalry would be detailed for her if she should wish to make any State appearance. And for her re-constituted Household, the Duchess of Portland would still be Mistress of the Robes though the post might now be something of a sinecure; Dighton Probyn and Miss Knollys, still full of energy though ten years the Queen's seniors, were of course part and parcel of her life; she asked two of King Edward's equerries, both gallant soldiers, Sir Arthur Davidson and Sir Henry Streatfield, to come into her personal service, and they gladly responded; the one was to be tenderly nursed by the Queen Mother in his last illness and to die with her daughter and herself close by his side; the other remained to be a source of help and strength to her in her own last years and to take the place of Probyn when the Last Post sounded over that gallant old warrior. The Kaiser came over in 1911 to assist in inaugurating the statue of Queen Victoria. Etiquette, which was never neglected, prescribed that the Queen Mother should just bid him and the Empress welcome, a perfunctory ceremony which need not take more than a few minutes; during the rest of the Imperial visit to London she could quite tactfully remain in the country as the

## HVIDORE

guest of her Chamberlain and friend Lord Howe. How little Alexandra then thought that the next proposal of a visit to England from the Kaiser would only occur when an exuberant Minister of the Crown was bold to suggest that the man responsible for the misery of the War should be brought to England as a prisoner of war and tried for his life.

And when the day of King George's Coronation was approaching and the question of the Queen Mother's position, and procession, was under discussion, she quietly intimated that although her son and daughter-in-law would surely be in her thoughts and prayers, she preferred to spend the busy bustling week in the quiet country home which her husband had bequeathed to her.

And there would be longer stays in Denmark, only Death had broken badly into the family circle there. King Christian had died, full of years and honours, in 1906, his son had but reigned a little while before he met his sudden end in a foreign town, and later King George, the "Willy" of old days, was to be foully murdered by a fanatic Greek.

And so Queen Alexandra and her sister made a little Danish home for themselves and at Hvidore the two sisters would, every summer, pass happy weeks of perfect freedom and delicious privacy. The villa lay about ten miles from Copenhagen, the entrance being on a village road. There were two small bedrooms, of which one had an ikon and sacred pictures, the other family photographs, hanging on the walls; one room was a trifle larger than the other and the sisters drew lots as to which it should be

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

assigned. Two gardens, one on each side of the road, were connected by a tunnel, and outside the gate of the one nearest to the sea was a carefully planned and sheltered walk where the Dowager Empress and the Dowager Queen would spend long mornings midway between the flowers and the waves, and recall to one another the triumphs they had enjoyed and the troubles which had beset them.

In the flux of time the Queen Mother began to "go out" again a little; she indulged once more her love for the opera, and as the King and Queen cared little for it, the Royal Box would be always at her disposal. And at a theatre the author of the play or the manager would always prepare a little resumé of the piece for her. And in 1914, with the Empress Marie, she paid a surprise visit to Ascot on the Cup day; the crowds heard she was there and gathered thick outside the enclosure gates to watch her in the centre of the Royal Box with the same smile and the same grace of gesture which Ascot crowds had noted fifty years ago.

A year earlier, to mark the fiftieth anniversary<sup>1</sup> of her arrival in England, there was instituted Alexandra Day—with roses for its outward and visible sign; and each year on a June day the swinging barouche, with its splendid bays, would be taken out again, and the Queen Mother would make her radiant progress round the streets of London, at almost every corner of which would be flower sellers with baskets

<sup>1</sup>To the Duchess of Rutland, with whom she was concerting the little details of King Edward's statue, the Queen dated her letter "The fiftieth anniversary of my coming to this Beloved Country."



(W & D Downey)

QUEEN ALEXANDRA WITH HER JAPANESE DOG.



### *ROSE DAY*

heaped high in the morning and sure to be empty before dusk. Rose Day has now its place in the British almanack, and every Rose Day myriads of flowers have been sold to willing buyers, and the sick and suffering have thereby benefited by hundreds of thousands of pounds.

## CHAPTER XXIX

"I ALWAYS told you he was a bad man ; now perhaps you'll believe me," was Queen Alexandra's passionate exclamation when, on that unforgettable Fourth of August, she knew that King George's fine, and final, appeal for peace had been roughly flung back, and that peace-loving England must strip herself for a deadly struggle with little thought of its duration and no count of its cost.

The War only fired again her ingrained desire to "help," and now especially to help the men who soon began to stream in from the firing line, broken in limb and mutilated in body; her time and her purse were available for any call on them; she had no wish to head any movement, only to help it.

If "the London" still remained her favourite ground, she was a familiar figure at every hospital within her reach. Her visits were sometimes a little unpunctual and often rather unconventional; if she was a little late in arriving, she was pretty sure to be a good deal later than was expected in leaving; if she thought the sun was in a patient's eyes, she would pull down the blind herself, if his pillow had slipped a little she wanted to adjust it with her own hands, and she somehow seemed to make every man feel that her visit had not been to the hospital as a whole

but to himself in particular. There was no thirst to learn secrets of the War, but Lord Kitchener arranged the Queen Mother should always have a special *communiqué* with any news likely to interest her; the message would be read two or three times over and then burnt immediately so that no one could learn a word from her which might in any degree be "secret." The War Secretary dissuaded her from going to see her regiment, the 19th Hussars, lest it should be an indication that they were going overseas, but their Colonel-in-Chief was proud to accept the custody of their special standard while they were on active service.

Her "influence" was of course incessantly invoked for this or that concession but she declined to interfere at any point except to put in a plea for the mothers who had been doubly bereaved; whether *propter hoc* or *post hoc* the Adjutant-General sought to establish a rule that when two sons in a family had been killed, the others should, if possible, be kept behind the line. In the autumn of 1915 Joffre came over to plead in his creamiest and most impressive tones for the expedition to Salonika, and he was asked if he could make it quite convenient to call at Marlborough House; the French Generalissimo postponed his departure for a couple of hours to do so, but at the railway station told the present writer that such was the charm of *la reine* Alexandra that the interview with her would have been worth a whole afternoon's delay.

Then came a day in June, 1916 when she was told, under seal of secrecy, that Kitchener was going on a

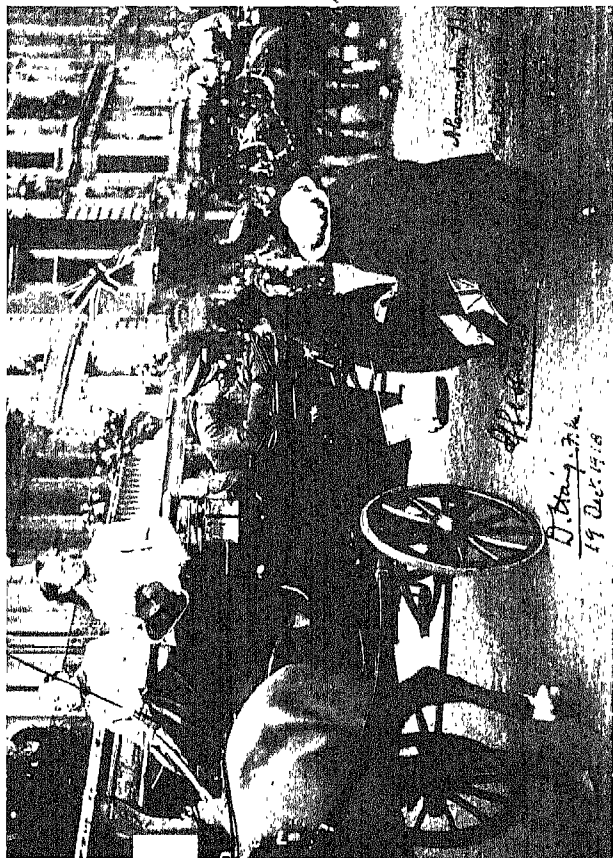


## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Mission to Russia; could he, it was asked, carry any letter from her to the Empress Marie? Queen Alexandra told a friend afterwards of her premonition that the journey would be fatal, and that she had begged, but of course begged in vain, it might be arrested. She knew that Kitchener had always greatly valued the marks of her friendship. And when a permanent and practical Memorial to the Great Soldier was inaugurated, she at once placed herself at the head of the Council; she convened a meeting of the members at Marlborough House, made them a little speech with apologies to Lord Rosebery and other orators for her temerity in doing so, and issued an appeal to receive for an answer an outpour of money which quickly secured a sum never before approached by a Memorial Fund.

"You think Russia will be with us to the end, I am calculating she will be out within a year," said Kitchener to the French authorities, on his way to the Dardanelles: the latter estimate was in practice nearer the truth. With the outbreak of the Russian Revolution two years later, Queen Alexandra may have rather ruefully reflected that her Russian relatives would henceforth be in many ways her dependents, but there was to be no sort of complaint as to a severe strain on her resources.

And when the Armistice was signed and an exhausted world might rest on its arms, the daughter of a Danish King could rejoice that the accursed system of Prussianism, which for fifty years had overshadowed Europe, was now crushed into dust, but for the rest of her life no bitter word about the Kaiser



QUEEN ALEXANDRA GREEK'S SIR DOUGLAS HAIG

Facing page 275.



## LORD KITCHENER

passed her lips; he had been a cruel foe but he was now a fallen foe and must be left in silence.

Then on a bright December morning the Soldier who had led a vast army to victory came home and there was once more proof of how very determined very amiable people can be. Queen Alexandra had let drop her intention of greeting the British Commander-in-Chief outside the gates of Marlborough House. A message reached her from Buckingham Palace deprecating this step and justly suggesting it might possibly cause inconvenience to police and traffic. As nothing further was heard it was supposed the message had taken effect, but as soon as it was signalled that Haig had left Charing Cross, the Queen Mother said simply "I go," and with Lady Haig and the little girls in attendance "go" she did, and her greeting of the Conquering Hero, who stood up in the carriage to shake hands with her, might well stand as one of the happiest of the immediate post-War incidents.

On 6th of July, 1922 Queen Alexandra gave a party; it was a children's party, and the children romped on the grass and watched Punch and Judy and the wonderful conjurer and the performing dogs, and their hostess went amongst them all and seemed to have a word for each, and the sun shone on the Marlborough House gardens and it was all colour

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA

and laughter with just an undertone of sadness, for the whisper had gone round that the Queen Mother had said it would be her last party. And so it proved to be, for a few days later without any fuss or farewell, she went down to Norfolk and London saw her no more.

The evening of life was to last for still two years and to be very easy and far from unhappy. The Queen was happy in her gardens and in her drives to the seashore and with the dogs grouped about her the same as ever; and she still wanted to "help" people, and especially men wounded in the War, although helping others had made large inroads into her income; and she kept in touch with all that was doing at "the London," and she wanted to hear all about her nurses, and about the disabled men in the Home which bore her name.

Perhaps she felt a little lonely for so many of those she cared for were out of sight. But Princess Victoria was constantly by her side and she could look forward to the weeks when "they" would be in residence at York Cottage, and she grew more and more fond of the grandchildren, and the exiled Russian Empress was much with her and there were still a few friends left, and dear Lord Halifax travelled from Yorkshire to spend the day with her and spoke of the "Treasury" which always lay beside King Edward's bed. And from the old servants, and especially from the one who for thirty years had been companion scarcely less than "dresser," it was all service of sheer love.

But she was very tired, for eighty years go to make

a long journey, and some of the road had been uphill with difficult corners to round; there had been sunshine on the way and plenty of it, but at times the traveller would see her path no less clearly because she must follow it through a mist of tears. And God knew she needed rest when, in the grey of a November noon, "His finger touched her and she slept." Even so Death seemed to come all reluctantly, and there was a long silent watch for those who cared greatly, and for the daughter who had never swerved from her mission of loving service: and through that last day and night the watchers could form no guess as to how far consciousness lingered while a gentle spirit was passing away. But all her life she had loved Nature's best gifts, the fragrance of flowers, the song of birds, the sound of sea waves, the laughter of little children, and though the blue eyes were now closed, there was perhaps already vouchsafed to them a vision of the country which, after all, need not be so very far off, where

. . . . the forests are in blossom  
 Like our orchards here in May  
 And the gardens never wither  
 But eternally are gay.

The snow was falling thick on the morning of the 27th of November and a white pall hung over the procession, headed by Life Guards in their scarlet cloaks, as the Queen Mother was borne from the Chapel Royal to the Abbey Church of Westminster where, for twelve hours, she would lie in Royal State. The long line of some 60,000 men, women and

## *QUEEN ALEXANDRA*

children which filed past the flower-laden bier, was rightly headed by a band of nurses; the changing hours which synchronised with the Changing of the Guard showed the diversity of appeal which, to her last hour, Alexandra had made to the country, and as midnight struck and the great gates swung to, the last to pay their tribute was a little party of working folk with bunches of violets which found a place alongside the high heap of costly wreaths.

The Service in the Abbey had been grand in its perfect simplicity; simpler still was the Service on the morrow in the Memorial Chapel at Windsor where King Edward was resting, and only those were present who had been very close to him and his Queen in life. Just the hymn she had specially loved, the prayer she had always prayed, a few last tears, a few last flowers, and Edward and Alexandra, King and Queen of England, were left to sleep the Great Sleep together.

